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**The Changing Role, Functions and Status
of the
HRD/Training Function in UK Public Sector Organisations**

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in the

Warwick Business School

University of Warwick

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work. Some of the preliminary findings have been published in two journal articles and one set of conference proceedings, as listed in the bibliography.

I also confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another University.

Signed:

Date:

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List of Abbreviations Used

E-	Electronic based
HC	Human Capital
HCM	Human Capital Management
HCD	Human Capital Development
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRD	Human Resource Development
IiP	Investors in People
L&D	Learning and Development
NHS	National Health Service
NPM	New Public Management
T&D	Training and Development
SHRD	Strategic Human Resource Development

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Without increased skills, we would condemn ourselves to a lingering decline in competitiveness, diminishing economic growth and a bleaker future for us all... Our nation’s skills are not world class and we run the risk that this will undermine the UK’s long-term prosperity”. (Leitch 2006 pp:1).

1. Introduction

Developing employee capability is presented as being vital to UK business success and economic prosperity (Leitch, 2006) and, in this context, at the level of the organisation, the human resource development/training function (HRD/T) is seen as playing an important part in this process. Given its importance in developing employee capability, this study seeks to examine the role and status of HRD/Training as an organisational function. It attempts to examine the function’s role in UK public sector organisations and determine to what extent, if any, its role and status has changed, and specifically, become strategic, during the five to ten year period prior to this study. As part of this process, the study aims to explore perceptions of HRD/Training’s organisational and occupational status as well as the factors that contribute to this state.

This chapter sets the scene for this study by introducing its context, aims and purpose and its scope. Additionally, the chapter will outline the study’s methodological approach and highlight some of the conceptual and methodological challenges encountered. Further, it

attempts to identify this study's specific contribution to the body of work on HRD/Training. However, before discussing its specific purpose and scope in detail, and by way of explaining why the role and status of HRD/Training is an important area of study, this chapter considers, briefly, the broader context in which this study, and specifically, UK public sector HRD/Training, is located.

2. The Context

2.1 Employee Development as a Policy Concern

Employee skills development and its impact on the UK labour market is an issue of significant debate within academia (Keep & Mayhew 1996, 1999; Grugulis et al 2004; Grugulis 2007; Eraut et al 2000; Felstead et al 2002) as well within the national policy arena (DfEE 1997; Leitch 2006). It has been widely argued that in a world where technology and financial capital move across national boundaries with speed and ease, employees and, moreover, skilled employees are the main, if not only, source of competitive advantage (Leitch 2006; Rothwell & Kazanas 2003; Gratton 2000).

As an example, the Leitch Review (2006), which was commissioned by Government to assess the UK's long-term skills needs, makes the case for the need for the UK - Government, employers and individuals - to invest in raising the levels of employee skills, and specifically emphasises the potential benefits to be gained from investing in skills development such as increased productivity and improved economic and social conditions. The Review states that unless the UK can make strengthen its skills base, public services will not deliver best value and the engine of the UK economy, businesses, will find it increasingly difficult to compete in the global market in the decade to come.

“In the 19th Century, the UK had the natural resources, the labour force and the inspiration to lead the world into the Industrial Revolution. Today we are witnessing a different type of revolution...In the 21st Century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice”. (Leitch 2006 pp: 1).

According to the Learning and Skills Council, employers are investing in developing the skills of their employees and their National Employers Skills Survey 2005 (LSC, 2006), reports that 45% of UK employers indicated training 90% or more of their current workforce and 74% reported training half or more of their employees. However, the Leitch Review (2006) shows that employer investment in skills varies significantly by type of employee, type of employer and sector of the economy, and that training by employers is disproportionately focused on highly-skilled workers, who are five times more likely to be trained at work than low skill workers. Around one third of firms do no training at all, and this varies between 50 per cent of employers in some sectors to just under five per cent in the best performing sectors.

In term of levels of financial investment in workforce development, as Keep argues, it is not possible to be precise about total level of annual expenditure on human resource development activities in the UK (Keep 2005). This is, in part, because, levels of spending figures are usually estimates and can vary considerably depending on the actual data gathered and how it is reported. For example, according to the Leitch Review, UK employers spend around £2.4 billion on direct course costs and up to £17.4 billion in total, excluding wages for employees (Leitch 2006). These figures were based on the

estimates of employer spend on training given in the National Employers Skills Survey 2005 (LSC 2006). Keep estimates that typical spending estimates range from £4.5 billion to £35 billion a year (Keep, 2005).

Some of difference in the figures of national employer training spend is due to different surveys gather and report different types of data. Some fail, in surveys, to distinguish between cost and expenditure, some focus on cash budgets and direct costs while others include overheads and even learners' salaries, and some cases, it is a matter of how the figures are presented. For example, the upper £17.5 billion figure cited in the Leitch Review (Leitch 2006) excludes the salary costs for employees whereas the National Employers Skill Survey 2005's (LSC, 2006) figure of £33.3 billion of annual training spending includes the salary costs of learners. Further, as the Learning and Skills Council's report indicates, their estimates of training spend need to be treated with caution at an absolute level because of, in the case of their study, the limitations of collecting information on training spend by means of a single question and using a telephone methodology (LSC, 2006).

In terms of the public sector, a Government Skills study (2007) indicates that the UK civil service spends between £500 million and £1 billion training and development, and that 43% of the government departments surveyed reported spending less than £500,000 on job related training and 48% reported spending more than £500,000. Again, however, and as the report acknowledges, these are only estimates because of the absence of consistent data on training spend in central government. Further, the report identifies the main barriers to training as the disruption to work patterns caused by people being away on learning (59%) and financial cost (50%). This appears to be a very similar situation to

that reported by the New Zealand State Services Commission (New Zealand State Services Commission, 2002). This report identifies three reasons for the lack of robust data on public sector training spend being: 1. the devolved public management system; 2. the lack of central agency emphasis on gathering training information, and 3. the lack of Ministerial demand for such information. All this suggests that figures on the level of investment in training and development need to be treated with some caution.

2.2 Employee Development as an Organisation Concern

As well as being an issue of policy interest, improving the level and quality of employee capability through improving skills and knowledge is a significant business and management concern (Rothwell & Kazanas 2003; Gilley & Maycunich 1998; Wright et al 1994). For example, Bassi et al, writing about the state of the training and development industry and identifying trends in HRD/Training practice, argue that in high-wage, developed countries employee development is increasingly important to an organisation's long-term success ((Bassi et al 1997, 1999). This has invariably placed the contribution of human resource development/training and development, the focus of this study, in the spotlight. Having made these introductory comments, what follows is a short discussion of the specific background to and scope of this study.

3. Background to & Scope of the Study

3.1 Scope of Study

Although the subject of HRD/Training has been written about extensively, a considerable amount of the literature tends to be focused on the practice of designing and delivering HRD and training interventions (Veale 1996, Arkin 1993; Duggett 1996; Merchant 1995; Drew & Davidson 1993; Kempton 1995). As the recent National Audit Office report on learning in government indicates, there are numerous publications focused on delivery methods and ‘how-to’ tool-kits (NAO, 2009) and many others on benchmarking the HRD/Training operation its level of expenditure, the range of programmes provided (see the ASTD State of Industry report 2009 which, based on member organisations participating in a training and development benchmarking survey, takes a comprehensive look at the HRD/Training practices and trends for 2008). Further, while there are many analyses of the role of HRD/Training practitioners (McLagan, 1989; O’Brien & Thompson, 1999; Valkeavaara, 1998; Carter et al, 2002; Sloman, 2009), much less has been written about the role and status of HRD/Training as an organisational function and area of professional practice. Rainbird’s 1994 paper is one of the few empirically based analyses of the changing role of the training function (Rainbird, 1994). This study aims to bridge this gap. Specifically, this study aims to examine the role and status, and particularly perceptions of role and status of HRD/Training at the level of the function.

Also, various studies have suggested that the HRD/Training role has been subject to significant change (McCracken & Wallace 2000; Garavan 1991; Rainbird 1994; CIPD 2001; Carter et al 2002; Valkeavaara 1998). Further, while the changing role of HRD/Training has been the subject of study for many decades, many previous studies have tended to approach its changing role in terms of the types of the methods and tools used by those engaged in HRD/Training delivery (Gane 1972; Rainbird 1994; CIPD 2001; Carter et al 2002; Veale 1996), routes and pathways to learning and development (Forrester et al. 1995; Garavan et al. 2002; CIPD 2001; Gibb 2003; Eraut 2000), and delivery mechanisms and arrangements such as outsourcing and the devolving of greater responsibility for learning to line managers (Wustemann 2002; Richbell 2001; Gibb 2003). This study questions the extent of such change and examines some of the ways in which it is perceived as having changed. This study specifically draws on analyses of the perceptions of the function of HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers in the public sector.

In terms of change, it has been suggested that the role of the HRD/Training function has become increasingly strategic and that this is the key to the function strengthening its organisational status (Buckley and Caple 1995; Horowitz 1999). However, as this thesis will show, this perspective is not unproblematic. One of the problems lies with the definitional boundaries of the concept 'strategic' and how it is used in practice. This issue will be revisited later in this chapter.

This thesis will not examine the historical roots of the HRD/Training function in any detail; others have already adequately covered this ground (Gane, 1972; Swanson & Holton, 2001; Alagaraja & Dooley, 2003). Neither will provide a detailed account of HRD/Training tools and methods or an analysis of the HRD/Training role based on the types of programmes practitioners – these have been well documented elsewhere (Harrison, 1997; Buckley & Caple, 1995; Reid & Barrington, 2001; Sloman, 2009). This study will touch upon but not deal with in any depth the role of outsourcing and contracting-out, and the impact of technology in re-shaping HRD/Training function – this would constitute a significant subject of investigation in itself and is not within the main scope of this study. Instead it will focus on examining the role of the HRD/Training function and the ways in which it has been perceived to have changed in terms of its tasks, skill and approaches, over the past decade. Another area of concern to this study is the status of the HRD/Training, specifically how those in the function and its partners (HR/Personnel specialists and managers) perceive its value to the organisation.

3.2 The Status of HRD/Training

While much of the human resources literature presents a reasonably encouraging picture of HRD/Training's contribution to employee development and performance improvement (Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003; Becker and Huselid, 2003; Purcell et al, 2003), another emerging strand in the literature concerns HRD/Training status as an organisational function and occupational standing (Key Note 2000; Gold et al 2002). Given this, one objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of HRD/Training's status as an organisational function and as a professional group.

Occupational status is a well established field of sociological study (Dingwall and Lewis 1983; Abbott 1988; Esland 1980), and there is an abundance of studies of many other occupations (Adkins & Swan 1981; Turner 2001; Chung & Whitfield 1999; Conway 2001; Willumsen 1998; Horobin 1983; Davies 1983; Johnson & Bowman 1997). However, as Gold et al argue, systematic and empirically based analyses of the occupational status of HRD/Training are limited (Gold 2002). Whilst there are a few conceptual and anecdotal pieces on the subject of HRD/Training as a profession (Gold et al 2003; Hatcher, 2006; Zahn 2001), there do not appear to be any substantial, empirically based analyses of the HRD /Training ‘profession’. It is hoped that this study might contribute in filling this gap. This study critically reviews established studies and analyses of occupations and professions and from these extracts a set of core features commonly accepted as characterising professional occupations with a high social standing. These, together with the findings of a ranking exercise used to assess perceptions of the organisational and occupational status HRD/Training, are employed as a means of examining HRD/Training’s perceived value as a function, as well as for analysing the robustness of the claim made by some that HRD/Training ‘has arrived as a profession’ (Zahn 2001).

3.3 HRD/Training in the Public Sector

This study is particularly focussed on the HRD/Training function in public sector organisations, and here, it is worth making a few observations about the public sector context and what makes it an interesting sector in which to examine the role and status of HRD/Training. To begin with, the UK government has a major stake in workforce skills, education and training policies (as articulated in the Leitch Review, 2006) and as

such has a keen interest and declared in HRD/Training's potential to improve employee capability including of those working in the public sector (NAO, 2009; Government Skills Report 2007). Specifically, in its role as a major employer, the UK government, as part of its modernisation and reform effort, has placed significant emphasis on the importance of the building public sector capacity and capability including encouraging the acquisition of professional skills and qualifications (HC 2007; Cabinet Office 1996; 2004a; OECD 2005; Government Skills 2007). For example, as the Public Administration Committee Report 2007 (HC 2007) points out, there is recognition within government that the civil service needs to build its level of skills in order to be seen as delivering effective services:

“The work of the Civil Service affects every British citizen. It performs many of its tasks admirably, despite enormous challenges of delivery in a world of increasing public expectations. Civil servants are extremely committed. Yet there remains a perception that it is not effective enough for the tasks it faces...The Government clearly agrees that the skills of the service need to be improved.” (HC 2007 pp: 3).

Even after three decades of reform, the challenge of reforming the public sector remains on the agenda. According to Lindquist, most governments, including the UK, have embraced the rhetoric of ‘managerialism’ and new public management. That is, as he explains, few governments disagree about the need to increase efficiency and to reduce deficits and debt, to improve service delivery, to improve accountability and to focus public servants on effective policy making and performance management (Lindquist, 2000). To deal with these contextual challenges, a 2005 OECD report on modernising

government emphasizes the need and urgency of the public sector strengthening its capability:

“Citizens’ expectations and demands of governments are growing, not diminishing: they expect openness, higher levels of service quality delivery, solutions to more complex problems... For the next 20 years policy makers face hard political choices. Since most governments cannot increase their share of the economy...this will require leadership from officials with enhanced individual technical, managerial and political capacities....” (OECD 2005 pp: 205-6)

This context makes public sector organisations, in their role as employers with the explicit pressure for them to strengthen their workforce capability to respond to the array of internal and external demands, interesting as a focus of study of the role and status of HRD/Training.

4. Public Sector and Academic Research

This study has relevance to the current debate within academia about ‘knowledge production and between academic research and the practice of public services management’ (Currie 2007; Pettigrew 2005; Shapiro and Rynes 2005). Specifically, it has been suggested that academic, organisational and management researchers could do more to bridge the academia-public sector divide (Mavin & Bryans 2000; Ferlie 2007), including by undertaking more public sector based research (Hagen & Liddle 2007):

“Extraordinarily, the management community’s peripheral vision has not taken into consideration a sector that is a significant size and the consequence of its management,

good or bad, has a direct impact on society and the economy.” (Hagen & Liddle 2007 pp: 326).

In making a case for the value of public sector research for the broader field of management, Kelman argues that historically, public organisations have served as a base for generating organisational knowledge from Weber onwards:

“Much of the pioneering work in organization theory was written about public organizations, or with public organizations in mind. When Weber wrote about bureaucracy, he was thinking of the Prussian civil service. Philip Selznick began his scholarly career writing about the New Deal Tennessee Valley.... Herbert Simon’s first published article (1937) was on municipal government performance measurement....Michel Crozier’s classic, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon (1954), was about two government organizations in France.” (Kelman, 2005 pp: 967)

Building on this perspective, some scholars have suggested that UK universities and specifically Business Schools increasingly have an important role to play in public sector knowledge production (Mavin & Bryans 2000; Ferlie 2007). Ferlie argues that, for example, that if Business Schools are to take on a public interest function then they cannot ignore government (Ferlie 2007).

While there are some obvious differences between the public and private sectors (Boyne et al 1999; Boyne 2002; Lavender 2006), in some respects, their management and organisational approaches may be converging (Blackburn 2006). Specifically, there is some consensus that the UK New Public Management style reforms have moved the UK public sector closer to private sector management models and practices (Ferlie 2007). As

further defence of the decision to focus on the public sector, Boyne's comparative study of human resources practice in the public and private sector showed that there was a higher level of involvement in employee training and development in the public than the private sector (Boyne et al 1999). This would suggest that the public sector would be a good sector to look to for shifts and development in HRD/Training practice.

This section set out the context of and rationale for this study. It specifically identified what will and will not be covered by this study. The next section will briefly introduce the main features of the research approach.

4. The Research Approach

4.1 Mixed Methods Approach

This study takes an empirical, mix methods approach to assessing the role and status of HRD/Training in UK public sector organisations. The aim was use to a number of different research tools to construct a multi-dimensional perspective of the issues of being examined. The intentions was to use methods that would combine a certain degree of preciseness and scope for replicability as well as not being too far removed from the 'real world' (Hoskin 2002) and enrich the analysis of the HRD/Training function.

The specific intention of this research was to examine how the HRD/Training function role and status is perceived by those working in and with it, namely, HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers. Also, the study aimed to examine the ways in which its role was perceived as having changed over time, and specifically, if it was seen as having become strategic.

4.2 Research Tools

Operationally, this study used several different research tools to examine the role and status of the HRD/Training function. These included analysis of HRD/Training job advertisements, a questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and interviews. In addition, the survey incorporated a set of occupational ranking exercises which were employed, in conjunction with existing analyses of professional occupations, to identify the factors that were likely to affect HRD/Training's organisational and occupational status.

In terms of research tools this study made use of the following:

1. an analysis of 743 HRD/Training job advertisements in the specialist HR publication *People Management* magazine in two seven month periods in 1996-7 and 2003-4 to assess the types of change taking place in terms of how the HRD/Training role was described at the point of recruitment. Job advertisements were chosen as a source of data because they were in the public domain and easy to access, especially those from 1996-7. Accepting the limitations of job advertisements such as the limited amount of information they offer, the job advertisements did provide some useful information about how the role is described at the point of entry, and the ways in which this was different in the two periods. However, although the study is primarily concerned with the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations, job advertisements analysis offers useful comparative public-private sector data.

2. A questionnaire survey of 305 public sector HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers was employed as a means of examining their perceptions of the HRD/Training function's role and status. The survey had a 16% response rate, which is disappointing but nevertheless, it shows that, allowing for some difference of perception about aspects of HRD/Training, there is a broadly consistent view of its role and status. In terms of respondents, there were more from local government (56%) than central government (36%) and there were nearly two-thirds of the HRD/Training specialists who responded worked in local government. It is interesting to note that of the 110 respondents from civil service organisations, the largest number, 47%, were managers and 27% were HRD/Training practitioners and the same number were in HR/Personnel roles.

In terms of findings, these indicate that the role of the HRD/Training function has been seen as changing, and more specifically, improving across a number of dimensions. However, there were differences in the perception of the extent of such change and improvement, with HRD/Training specialists, more so than managers, indicating a positive view of the changes to and within the HRD/Training function. In contrast to the overall relatively positive perceptions of the role of HRD/Training, the reported perceptions of its organisational and occupational status were poor. Further, and surprisingly, these poor status perceptions were generally consistent across the three categories of respondent role.

3. Pre- and post-survey focus group discussions and a small number of interviews were used as a means of contextualising and testing the survey findings. The pre-survey discussions were useful in informing the development of the survey and the post-survey discussions were helpful in helping with the interpretation of the findings.

Each of these methods presented a number of challenges including, for example, technical difficulties such as designing a template for recording the job advertisements data, and methodological dilemmas such as deciding whether or not to include the ranking section in the survey. We will return to these issues in later chapters. The next section outlines some of the conceptual challenges encountered in this study, particularly in terms of the issue of the boundaries of the concepts underpinning this study, namely, HRD, strategic HRD, and status.

5. Key Concepts and the Definitional Challenge

5.1 Overview

Methodologically, this study encountered several challenges, as described in Chapter Three: Research Methodology. The first of these concerned the three main concepts around which this research is framed: human resource development (HRD), strategic HRD, and occupational status. As Chapter Two: Literature Review shows, each is complex, multi-dimensional, and subject to much debate. The following section illustrates this by briefing discussing the three main concepts starting with the concept of human resource development.

5.2 The Concept of Human Resource Development (HRD)

There is much debate about the concept of HRD and its conceptual boundaries. Specifically, according to Garavan ((Garavan 1997; 1995) and many others (for example, Garavan, Heraty and Barnicle 1999; McGoldrick, Stewart and Watson 2001; McLean & McLean 2001; Walton, 2003; Stewart 2005) there is no single, unified or precise definition of the concept HRD. Walton (1999) and Lee (2001) suggest that part of the problem that HRD is inherently vague, nebulous and loosely bound concept. Similarly, Bates et al (2002) and Holton (2002) argue that the concept HRD is prone to definitional broadness, vagueness and complexity which contribute to an unhelpful lack of clarity about what it is and is not, and Blake (1995) states:

“...the field of human resource development defies definition and boundaries. It’s difficult to put into a box.” (Blake, 1995 p.22).

What adds to the definitional problem is, as Weightman (1998) suggests, as with many other areas of organisational management, the vocabulary is not static and changes over time so that the same term can be taken to refer to different things at different times or a particular practice that continues largely unchanged can be given a new label:

“The difficulty is that sometimes it is because of changes of style, at other times because of a change in substance. Distinguishing the two is not always easy until later” (Weightman, 1998 p.7).

Not only is there a debate about the term HRD and its relationship with other related concepts such as training and learning, there is even a debate about the value of trying to define HRD. For example, Bates et al (2002) claim that attempts to define HRD have had a limited return. They argue that, despite the at times fervent discourse around describing what HRD is or should be, “...little has been accomplished in terms of generating consensus ...” (Bates et al 2002 p.229). Ruona and Lynham (1999) agree with Bates et al (2002) and describe the existing discourse as a self-serving loop:

“[it is] ...a conversation that is ongoing and becomes the prominent focus such that little else actually happens except the having of the conversation. Very few new thoughts are generated, positions are defended, tradition weighs heavy, and very little progress is made in understanding and creating new meaning.” (Ruona and Lynham 1999 p.215)

In fact, even the very process of defining HRD is subject to debate. Many analysts have observed and commented on the problems of defining HRD (Walton, 2003, Metcalfe and Rees, 2005; Stewart 2005; Lee 2003) and several have argued against even attempting to do so (Lee, 2001, Mankin, 2001; Holton 2003). Some go as far as arguing that trying to define HRD, in fact, does a disservice to the discipline and to HRD professionals:

“My fear is that we will find ourselves spending so much time defining our discipline that we will forget to do the enormously important work our discipline needs to do... Our constituents and customers have many questions that we cannot answer very well...Will the fact that we have 1 definition or 20 definitions make any difference in how well we serve them? I doubt it?” (Holton 2003 p.275).

According to Lee (2001), attempts to define HRD have limited value because most definitions try to 'fix' HRD as a permanent state, whereas the practice itself is more of a 'becoming' than of a 'being': *"I examined promotional literature aimed at HRD professionals and found four different ways in which the word 'development' was used: development as maturation, as shaping, as a voyage and as emergent."* (Lee 2001 p.331)

Mankin (2001) makes a plea for HRD academics and practitioners to 'embrace' HRD's ambiguity:

*"The current debate is characterized by a view that HRD is too amorphous a concept. Yet, if HRD has a role to play in helping organizations develop in an era of rapid and continuous change, then there is a need....to accept that HRD itself is a continuously evolving, adaptive concept...The HRD of tomorrow **will** be different from the HRD of today, and it is this process of fluidity that most aptly captures the unique characteristic of the concept itself, and thus helps to identify its unique contribution to organisational development"* (Mankin 2001 p. 67-8).

Despite these expressed reservations, many others have continued undeterred in their efforts to define the concept. Torraco defines HRD as *"...the integrated use of training and development, organisation development, and career development to improve individual, group and organizational effectiveness"* , *"transdisciplinary"*, and with the potential to *"...not only develop work skills, [but also] instil values, enable change, and advocate for diversity, equity, social responsibility and spirituality in work."* (Torraco 2005 p.251).

Similarly, Reid and Barrington have described HRD as “...*anything relating to the development of people, including promotion policies, career development and advice, staff appraisal, skills definition, forward organisational planning, and ethical policies...*” (Reid and Barrington 2001 p. 3).

Some take an even broader perspective and define HRD as any organised learning experience (Nadler 1984; Harrison 1997; Walton 1999; Lee 1996). Yet others have broadened this out even further to include both formal, and informal and incidental learning experiences (Eraut 2000).

As will be discussed in the literature review in Chapter Three, in some instances, HRD is presented as being synonymous with training, with the HRD ‘badge’ merely replacing the old training one. In other cases, it is presented as the organisational function that promotes and facilitates the delivery of a wide range of employee and organisation development, and organisational culture change activities of which training is one set of activity (Nadler, 1981). According to Buckley and Caple (1995) and McGoldrick et al (2001), the two labels, training and HRD, co-exist and continue to be used interchangeably, both in the literature and in practice, and indeed, in this thesis. This definitional complexity increases where the literature conceptually weaves ‘HRD’ and ‘Training and Development’ together with an ever increasing number of other, related concepts such as ‘learning’ (Zwick 2002; Suff 1998), ‘workplace learning’ (WPL) (Rothwell, 1999) ‘education’, ‘human capital management’, ‘talent management’, and ‘knowledge management’(Stiles and Kulisechana 2003; Foong and Yorston 2003; Barette 2004; Hall 2004; Grugulis 2007).

This all adds to the perception of the concept HRD being almost borderless. It is worth noting that a few see as its strength (Mankin 2001; Lee, 2001) while many others see this as its inherent weakness (McGoldrick et 2001; Zahn, 2001; Regalbuto 1991; Truss et al 2002; Weightman 1998; Reid and Barrington 2001). Some point out this apparent ‘definitional mess’ has negative consequences for not just a conceptual understanding of HRD but also for its very identity as a profession. For example, Regalbuto (1991) argues that this lack of a clear definition reflects the absence of a unified identity within HRD as a profession, which itself serves to undermine the status of HRD.

The existing conceptual complexity has been further complicated by the fact that over the past decade there has been an additional shift from the use of the label ‘training’ being substituted with the idea of ‘learning’ (CIPD 2006a; Segrue & Rivera 2005; Garavan 1997; Garavan et al 1999), and the introduction of affiliated concepts such as ‘talent development’ (CIPD 2006b) and ‘human capital development’ (ASTD 2003; PWC 2006).

In this thesis, the terms ‘training’ (instead of learning) and HRD will be used throughout for consistency. Specifically, the hybrid term ‘HRD/Training’ will be employed to reflect the interchangeable nature of the two individual concepts.

5.3 The Concept of Strategic HRD

Like HRD/Training, the concept of strategic HRD/Training is essentially contested. The concept has been variously defined and there is an absence of a single unifying definition (Garavan et al. 1995; McCracken & Wallace 2000; CIPD 2001; Raey 1994). Part of what adds to the difficulty of defining strategic HRD is that even the concept of

‘strategic’ is variously interpreted. Ansoff (1987), a leading thinker on strategy, describes strategy as being about mapping out the future directions that need to be adopted against the resources available to the organisation. Other definitions on offer include

“Strategy is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long terms which achieves advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources within a changing environment, to meet the needs of markets to fulfil stakeholder expectations.”
(Johnson & Scholes, 1999 p.10)

“[Strategy is] ...developing a broad formula for how an industry is going to compete, what its goals should be, and what policies will be needed to carry out those goals.”
(Porter, 1980 p.xvi)

Some argue that many existing analyses and typologies of strategy, located in the private sector context, do not transfer entirely to the public sector (Boyne & Walker, 2004; Joyce, 1999). Other definitions on offer and claiming to be better suited to the public sector with its specific politically driven policy context prone to short-termism and the pressure to come up with ‘quick-fix’ solutions (Joyce, 1999) include:

“Strategies help organisations think through what they want to achieve and how they will achieve. Putting strategies into practice and acting strategically ensures that they are focused on the things that really matter – not buffeted by events or short-term distractions – and are able to allocate their resources accordingly.” (Cabinet Office, 2004c p.5)

“[It is] ... a pattern of action through which [organisations] propose to achieve desired goals, modify current circumstances and/or realise latent opportunities.” (Rubin, 1988 p. 88).

However, as Boaz and Solesbury (2007) in Fischer et al (2007), writing about the use of the terms 'strategy' and 'strategic' in political life, illustrate, the terms are used indiscriminately and attached to a wide variety of activities and frequently used only to denote importance and seriousness. The concepts of strategy and strategic are used inter-connectedly, as shown in the work of Boaz and Solesbury (2007) with the concept 'strategic' being taken as meaning, at a broad level, the act, position or process which belonging to, useful or important to strategy (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1973).

Others such as Berlinski et al (2005) suggest there is added complexity of applying the concepts of strategy and strategic to the government context. For example, they argue that although governments seek to achieve long term improvements for their citizens, and political leaders have a vested interest in ensuring that these improvements are achieved, the pressures of their political working lives are such that they tend to demand – and receive – advice from officials that helps them perform at a sprint rather than over a marathon. The most senior officials, who often make up the management board, tend to behave in similar ways they too are under pressure to focus on the immediate pressures of running the department – its budgets, staffing, managing risk – and on delivering policy objectives and rather less on the broader outcomes the department is pursuing. This situation lends itself to a level of short-termism and demand for immediacy in terms of solutions to given problem, all of which leads to questions about government organisations' capacity to work and remain working strategically.

As applied to HRD/Training, the concept 'strategic' has been variously defined. For example, it is commonly understood this implies that the function has shifted its position

as a non-core provider of training to that of a core, strategic business partner. The 'evidence' frequently cited in support of this assertion includes the claim that it is no longer simply being 'immersed in routine training programmes', is better integrated with corporate goals and priorities, and is an agent for change (Horwitz 1999; Garavan et al 1995). Noel & Dennehy (1991) indicate that strategic HRD/Training refers to those areas of practice where function connects to corporate strategy and where it is taking a proactive approach to aligning its plans and programmes with corporate objectives (Harrison 1997), and thereby ensuring its work forms part of a comprehensive and integrated approach to employee and organisation development (McCracken & Wallace 2000). McCracken and Wallace stretch this definition even further and stress that strategic HRD needs to contribute to shaping rather than to simply respond to corporate strategy (McCracken & Wallace 2000).

However, as some point out, there are concerns about the concept strategic HRD/Training. The literature suggests that while strategic HRD/Training has been conceptually defined and is widely used as a label within the academic community, evidence of how well it has been translated into practice is patchy (Reid & Barrington 2001; Keep 1989). This divergence of perspectives provides, in part, the impetus for this study. It examines various perspectives on offer and uses these to develop a framework for analysing the extent to which the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations can reasonably be considered as strategic. It is anticipated that this study will be of both conceptual value in terms of proposing an adapted model of 'strategic HRD/Training', and of practical value in terms of 'holding up a mirror' to policy makers and practitioners that reflects the current status of HRD/Training.

In terms of the exploring the strategicness of the HRD/Training function, Miles and Snow's concept of 'strategic fit' (Miles & Snow 1990) and Garavan et al's concept of 'strategic HRD' (Garavan 1991) were particularly useful. The concept of 'strategic fit' refers to the relationship between business strategy and organisational structure. For an organisation to be economically viable, there needs to be alignment between its business strategy and its structure (Miles & Snow, 1990). In this study, the types of strategic fit described by Miles and Snow and the dimensions of 'strategic HRD' presented by Garavan (Garavan 1991) informed the development of a framework used together to assess the 'strategicness' of the HRD/Training role as perceived by those responding to the questionnaire survey. Both the two original frameworks, Miles and Snow's and Garavan's, will be discussed in the literature chapter and their conceptual value will be explored in Chapter 6 that deals with the results of the questionnaire survey.

5.4 The Concept of Occupational Status

As is the case with the previous two concepts, 'occupational status' is complex and multi-faceted concept, and as the literature review chapter will show, it is a well established field of sociological study as illustrated by, for example, the classic work of Elliot (1972), Dingwall and Lewis (1983), Abbott (1988), Guppy and Goyder (1984) Hodge et al (1966), Turner (2001), Freidson (1986), Freidson (1973), Macdonald (1995), Goldthorpe and Hope (1974) and Esland (1980). At one level, occupational status refers to the distinct, symbolic value attributed to a particular area of work; at another level, it can refer to the comparative, specific privileges and power afforded to an occupation. Further, many authors make specific connections between 'the acceptance of an

occupation as a profession' and its status and prestige (Johnson and Bowman,1997; Willumsen, 1998; Hatcher, 2006).

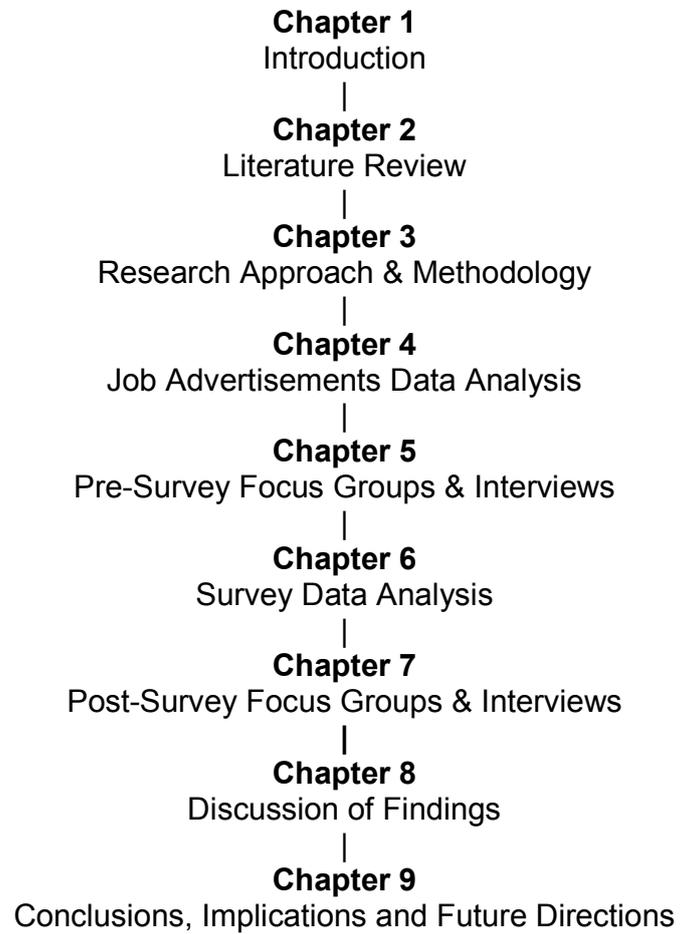
Drawing on such literature, this study assesses the organisational and occupational status of HRD/Training and suggests its status is determined by the complex interplay of a variety of interconnected factors including its perceived level of power and influence, its career potential, the level of qualification of those who work in the function, and its perceived value to the organisation.

Having considered some of the conceptual and methodological issues underpinning this research, the next section offers a short overview of the structure of the thesis as a whole and an outline of each of the chapters.

4. Structure of the Thesis

In terms of structure, the thesis incorporates nine chapters, as shown in Figure 1.2:

Figure 1.2 Outline of Thesis



6. Summary & Concluding Comments

Although HRD/Training, as an area of organisational practice, attracts a lot of practitioner oriented analyses, it is of increasing academic interest with, for example, the launch of university-led Masters programmes in human resource development and the appointment of Professors of HRD (Iles, 1994). Further, some have called for a greater level of bridge-building between academic research and professional practice (Hamlin et al 1998; Swanson & Holton 1997; Hambrick 1994; Currie 2007), and this study is seen as an opportunity to make a contribution to such bridge-building.

This chapter has outlined the aims and research questions underpinning this study. It has highlighted the study's mixed methods research approach and introduced the specific research tools employed. Further, it has raised some of the conceptual challenges facing HRD/Training as a field of study, which apply to this study as well. In terms of contribution, it is hoped that this work adds, in however small a way, to the field of human resource development research, and specifically, to an understanding of how its role is perceived not only by HRD/Training practitioners but also by those in a related function, HR/Personnel, and managers an one important group of stakeholders, and how perceptions of its role affect perceptions of its status as an organisational function. Additionally, it is hoped that, given this study incorporates an analysis of HRD/Training as organisational function and as an occupational activity, it makes a contribution to the broader area of study of organisational status and occupational status.

Specifically, it hopes to revitalise debate around a number of critical HRD/Training issues including questioning the extent to which the representation of HRD/Training as strategic is part of current reality as opposed to still remaining more of an aspirational goal. Additionally, it is hoped that this study's will contribute to the HRD/Training community's understanding of the challenges it continues to face, particularly in relation to its status as an organisational function. Finally, as highlighted earlier in the chapter, HRD/Training plays an important role in developing people and organisations – therefore it matters to business, the public sector and the UK economy. As such it owes it to itself and its stakeholders to be self-reflexive about its role, status and contribution to organisational life, and it is hoped that this is something this study encourages.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Concepts, Concerns and Challenges

"It could be said that one doesn't have to make the case for training. In fact, many who occupy senior and executive positions have publicly endorsed the claims that can be attributed to training and extol the competence and the contribution of their own training departments. However, this leaves us with something of a riddle because a close examination of the staffing, function and status of training departments very often does not reflect the apparent views and attitudes of organizational chiefs".

(Buckley and Caple, 1995 P.17).

1. Introduction

Human resource development (HRD)/Training and development is a broad subject rooted in a variety of disciplines and as such, to produce a focused yet representative and comprehensive review of its literature is challenging. While this chapter does make an attempt to reflect the breadth and multidisciplinary nature of HRD/Training, for practical purposes, it intends to concentrate on the main themes, concepts and issues of concern to this study, that is, the role, position and status of the HRD/Training function, with a particular focus on HRD/Training in the UK public sector.

Accordingly, this chapter confines itself mainly to three main types of literature, specifically, that dealing with:

1. human resource development (HRD) and workplace education, learning and development
2. analyses of occupations and professions, and
3. analyses of public sector reform and management

What follows next is an examination of literature dealing with HRD/Training's changing context, role and position within organisations. This includes specific consideration of the literature dealing with strategic HRD/Training and its organisational and occupational status.

2. The Changing Context of HRD/Training

One important theme in human resources management and development literature relates to the role of HRD/Training needs to play in order to survive in its changing context (Suff 1998; Rothwell et al 1999; Morton and Wilson 2003; CIPD 2001; Bassi et al 1997), and specifically the need for the function to demonstrate its strategic relevance (McCracken & Wallace, 2000a). This theme is located in the broader interest in the organisational and management literature around issues of organisational excellence and organisational failure. Miles and Snow explain that this ranges in focus on specific concerns such as the very survival of aging industries, the pursuit of excellence in mature industries or the preparation of organisations for rapidly changing global markets and advancements in technology (Miles and Snow, 1990).

While recognising that it is not convincing to offer easy explanations that account for organisational success or failure, Miles and Snow propose that the concept of strategic fit as an important and useful starting point. To elaborate, their basic premise is that successful organisations are those that achieve strategic fit with their market environment and support their strategies with appropriately designed structures and management processes. By contrast, less successful organisations achieve poor fit externally and/or internally. Building on this, they offer a conceptual framework incorporating four levels of fit, as follows:

1. *Minimal fit* between strategy, structure and process which is essential to all organisations operating in a competitive environment. Miles and Snow (1990) suggest that if a misfit occurs for a prolonged period, the result is usually failure.
2. *Tight fit*, both internally and externally, which Miles and Snow associate with sustained excellence in business performance.
3. *Early fit*, which is described as the discovery or articulation of a new pattern of strategy, structure and process frequently resulting in performance records, which in sporting circles would merit Hall of Fame status. The invention or early application of a new organisation form may provide a more powerful, competitive advantage than a market or technological breakthrough.
4. *Fragile fit* describes a state of vulnerability to both shifting external conditions and to inadvertent internal unravelling and deteriorating fit.

The concept of strategic fit, is a process as well as a state, and refers to a dynamic pursuit of alignment between the organisation and its environment and to arrange resources internally in support of that alignment. Miles and Snow argue that tight fit provides the conditions for performance excellence, however, they accept that in a rapidly changing environment it can be difficult to maintain a tight fit between the major components of an organisation and suggest that the 'perfect fit' is most often a state to be striven for rather than accomplished. Further, they explain that minimal fit is a state required for organisational survival.

In the case of HRD/Training, there is consensus it too needs to be aligned to its changing environment (Rothwell et al 1999; Bassi et al 1997). This includes alignment with developments at a national policy level as well as at the local, organisational level. For example, particular links are made between employee skills and learning and productivity as illustrated by government driven Leitch Report, published in December 2006. This argues for investment in workforce skills, indicating that skills development and increased productivity go hand in hand. It states that in order for UK businesses need to compete in a global, knowledge-based economy, they will need to have a workforce that can match or beat the best in the world. Further, Leitch pointed out that 70% of the 2020 workforce has already completed their compulsory education. Therefore, there is a need to continue to raise skill levels by focusing on those who are working and those now looking for work or have who have been affected by the recent job losses. In the context of such perspectives equating productivity in the context of the knowledge driven economy, HRD/Training “...becomes the lynchpin around which revolve competitive

strategy and the maintenance of competitive advantage” (Keep 2005 p. 215) and as such needs to demonstrate its alignment with the national skills agenda.

In keeping with reports asserting the need for a national skills investment strategy, there has been an increasing emphasis on learning and development in the public sector as articulated in the recent publication of the NAO report *Helping Government Learn* (NAO, 2009) and the *Government Skills* report (Government Skills, 2007) on levels and types of investment in public sector learning. These reports start from the shared premise that in order to achieve value for money in public services, public service organisations need to become better at learning. The NAO 2009 report (NAO, 2009), based on an analysis of multiple case examples of approaches to training in government departments, emphasizes the role training can play in developing new skills and knowledge. It is interesting to note that the report identified silo structures, ineffective mechanisms to support learning, a high turnover in the workforce and a lack of time for learning as the main barriers to effective learning, and states that there is scope for senior leaders in departments to give greater priority to learning. The *Government Skills 2007* report indicates that its research identified the two main barriers to training in government departments were concerns about the time learners spent away from work, and financial costs both direct (expenditure on training) and indirect, the cost of the learner being away from work (Government Skills, 2007). The following section looks at position of HRD/Training in the public sector in more detail.

3. Public Sector HRD

This section will consider the specific role and status of the HRD/Training function within the public service sector, the sector in which is of concern to this study. One perspective strongly represented in the public administration literature concerns the increasing pressure, brought about by globalisation, on governments to improve the competitiveness of their national economies (Lamond 1998; World Bank 1997; OECD 2000). Within this context, the main thrust of papers on UK public sector reform seems to be that the UK government, in keeping with public reform programmes in other countries, is under pressure to improve its performance, make better use of all its human resource potential and strengthen the quality of its policy making and service delivery (Cabinet Office 2004; 1999, 1996, 1994; Metcalfe and Rees, 2005; OECD, 2000b; Gershon 2004; O'Toole 2006; Romzek, 2000).

These trends, which serve as the backcloth as well as driver for some of the change affecting the human resources functions itself, have been attributed in part to the influence of the New Public Management (NPM) model. This model, which emerged in the early 1990s, is based on the premise of private sector practices as a solution to solving the problems of poor public administration and has had a dramatic impact on the functioning of public services worldwide (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993; Hood 1991; Giaque, 2003; McLaughlin, 2002; Monteiro, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000; Lane, 2000; Rhodes, 1991; Ferlie, et al. 1996). Compared to the so-called 'Traditional Bureaucracy' model (with its emphasis on rule and procedures), the defining features of NPM are seen as promoting greater levels of professionalism, skill and efficiency. NPM has been characterised by decentralisation and the delegation of responsibilities (such as

the conversion of large government departments into smaller, semi-autonomous, delivery focused Executive Agencies), performance based accountability (with the use of performance contracts at the level of the organisation and the individual), and competitive mechanisms (with the use of compulsory competitive tendering and outsourcing) - see Hood, 1998; Borins 1996; Larbi, 1999; Giaque, 2003; Herne, 2005; Lane, 1997). However, it is interesting to note there is little research that explores the impact of NPM on the role of HRD/Training in any systematic way. Koch is one of the few to analyze the challenges NPM places on HRD/Training, and examines the extent to which the latter has been a tool for facilitating NPM reform's article is one of the few (Koch 1999).

There appear to be an increasing number of papers and documents put together by public sector agencies emphasising the importance of HRD/Training's role within public service organisations (OECD, 2000a; UNDESA, 1998, 2005; Cabinet Office, 1996; 1999; HC 2007; Warrington 2004). In the context of public sector reform, HRD/Training is seen as a lever for facilitating both performance improvement and organisational change (OECD 2000a). According to Goslin (1975), in addition to skills development, government organisations use it as a means of disseminating information about new policy initiatives, new methods of service delivery, or changes in internal developments, for example, by the use of mandatory equal opportunities training to ensure adherence to equality policies and practices at work. The latter is illustrated by Clements (2000) in his account of how the equality training is deployed in the police service, and by Auluck (2001) who discusses how mandatory diversity training is used in the UK civil service. The OECD 2000 report (OECD 2000a) suggest that government reform is about changing behaviour

not just structures and HRD/Training has a part to play in enabling this to happen. HRD/Training can be used as a means of communicating organisational values, norms and standards - and can be, over time, a tool for organisational change (Mankin 2001; Duggett 1996; Pattanayak, 2003).

Further, The OECD report identifies HRD/Training as having the potential to support communication strategies that are essential to the effective implementation of public service reform programmes, on the assumption that ‘informed employees make informed choices’. The report refers to the concept of the ‘learned government’ and argues that:

“Learning is the much-sought attribute of adaptive and strategic organisations. This is the imprint that separates the winners and losers in the knowledge race. Our current management lexicon overflows with hyphenised applications: life-long learning strategies, learning organisations, learning companies, learning societies, learning cultures, learning individuals...” (OCED 2000a p. 105).

Human resource development in the UK public sector would appear to mirror this generalised picture, including it being subject to the myriad of related “hyphenated applications”. That is, a series of ‘learning’ and performance improvement initiatives have been adopted by large parts of the UK public sector, including the Investors in People standard, the Business Excellence framework and the principles of the Learning Organisation (Raper, 1997; Berry, C. & Grieves, 2003; Davies 1998; Hill 1996; Hill & Stewart 1999; Jackson 1999; PWC 2000; Smith, 2000; Smith and Taylor 2000; Swain, 1999; Seifert & Tegg 1998). For example, Investors in People (IiP), an established Department of Employment initiative, was launched in 1991 and provides a framework,

based on best practice in private and public sector, of the key characteristics of employers who make the most of their employees' potential in achieving business goals. All government departments and agencies are supposed to sign up for IiP accreditation and this has had some impact on the HRD/Training function (Hillage and Moralee 1996).

However, some recent literature suggests that human resources management within UK public service organisations is in fact under threat (O'Toole, 2006). Specifically, the human resource function is under continuing pressure from stakeholders to demonstrate that it adds value to the effectiveness of public service organisations and that it plays an essential role in improving individual performance and organisational productivity. Factors such as scarcity of resources, skill shortages, demographic changes, increased citizen expectations of public services, political pressures, international benchmarks and so on, are holding human resource professionals to account more and more (CIPD, 2005; Gershon, 2004; HC 2007). In this context, several writers question the extent to which public sector HRD/Training is really treated as a strategic element of organisational life has been questioned (O'Toole 2006; Seifert & Tegg 1998; Truss 2003). Truss (2003), writing about the human resources function in the National Health Service, states:

“We also found that, unlike the private sector, HRM within such a public sector organisation operates within a particularly complex framework of interdependencies that serves to constrain the degree to which it can be strategic. We especially noted the influence of the ‘public sector heritage’, which coloured people’s perceptions of HR’s role...in influencing employees’ training, development and careers...” (Truss 2003 p.58)

There have been specific doubts about the extent to which public sector organisations invest in HRD/Training in favourable political and economic conditions and the extent to which they do so when faced with a crisis. O’Toole cite examples of organisations suddenly investing in training and development following a high profile crisis, for example, in policing systems and methods, child protection practices and so on, and how such investment can be curtailed once the public or political spotlight fades (O’Toole, 2006). Further, as the NAO report 2009 and the Government Skills report on the level of investment in learning in government organisations indicates, cost of training is an issue that concern for decision-makers in government (NAO 2009; Government Skills 2007) However, this concern with expenditure is not only a public sector issue, as Grugulis, agreeing with Keep and Mayhew (1999), argues that for most organisations, training is a third-order issue, stating that:

“For organisations that choose to compete on cost, (it is) an unjustifiable extravagance – and large sections of the British economy still compete on cost.” (Grugulis 2007 pp:5).

4. HRD/Training’s role at an organisational level

In parallel, and to some extent, as a response to government reports emphasizing the need to strengthen the national skills base as well as, specifically, government organisations’ capability to respond to challenges presented by the reform agenda, there has been an ever growing body of literature claiming that the human resource function, and the HRD/Training as its associated function, is gaining new leverage in relation to business strategy (CIPD, 2003; Budhwar, 2000; Khatri & Budhwar; Tamkin et al 1997; Suff, 1998). For example, Buckley and Caple (1995) argue that HRD has a role in developing

the people in ways that support business strategy and in helping grow a culture that will ensure continuous business achievement. It is suggested that not only is HRD/Training playing an important role in term of employee development it is also associated with performance improvement (Huselid 1995) and has the potential to make a significant impact on company performance and competitiveness (Schuler and Jackson 1987; Dyer and Reeves 1995; Romiszowski 1990; CIPD 2003; Ulrich and Lake 1991; Nadler 1984; Hall 1984).

This has given rise to the concept strategic HRD which has flowed from the emergence of the broader concept of strategic HRM that has been incorporated into human resources literature as a means of conveying the sense of the human resources function's business value and potential contribution to the success of the organisation. (Hendry & Pettigrew 1986; Boxall 1994; Truss and Gratton 1994; Lundy 1994; Truss, 2003; IRS 2004). Given the centrality of the concept strategic HRD in this study, it is important to have understand how it has been conceptualised in the human resources literature. This is easier said than done given that there are a wide range of perspectives on offer as discussed in the next section. Having looked at some of the ways in which the concept HRD/Training is defined and applied, the next section considers the concept of 'Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD)' more fully.

5. Strategic HRD/Training: balancing aspiration and application

The concept strategic HRD has increasingly featured in the literature on training and development over the past 20 years (Garavan 1991; Rainbird 1995; Garavan et al. 1995; 1998; Stewart & McGoldrick, 1996; Harrison, 1997) and a wide variety of definitions are on offer (Harrison 1997; Garavan 1991; Garavan et al 1995; McCracken & Wallace 2000). One of the main difficulties surrounding the concept strategic HRD is the lack of consensus about what it means conceptually. Part of this problem is located in the fact that, as discussed in the introductory chapter (Chapter One) the very term 'strategic' itself has many different interpretations and, according to Mintzberg, it denotes a range of different things in practice (Mintzberg 1991).

Returning to the issue of how the concept strategic HRD/Training is conceptualised in the literature, Garavan emphasising the connection between HRD/Training provision and value-added to the business states that the term is widely used to mean the “*planned learning and development of people as individuals and as groups to the benefit of the business as well as themselves.*” (Garavan et al 1995 p. 4). This requires the HRD/Training function, argues Harrison, to ensure that its delivery is in alignment with the organisation’s mission and strategic goals (Harrison 1997). Part of the process of conceptualising strategic HRD has involved some in an exploration of the differences between ‘traditional’ training and development and strategic HRD as demonstrated by Garavan, Costine and Heraty (1995). Drawing on Beer and Spector’s earlier analyses of training and development, (Beer & Spector, 1989), they categorise this as follows:

Traditional training and development is usually piecemeal and reactive and a response to a specific problem.

Strategic HRD is proactive and organisation-wide and is linked to strategic planning and cultural change.

Sambrook (1998; 2000), in her study of HRD/Training in the National Health Service, presents the concepts of 'training and development', 'HRD' and 'strategic HRD' as a typology labelled 'Tell', 'Sell' and 'Gel'. 'Tell' encompasses training and development, characterised as reactive/inactive, operational and resource dependent; 'Sell' incorporates HRD, characterised as proactive, tactical and independent; and 'Gel' encompasses strategic HRD, characterised as interactive, core and interdependent.

McCracken and Wallace offer a detailed analysis of the concept and stress that strategic HRD/Training needs, through the development of a learning culture, to shape rather than to simply respond to corporate strategy (McCracken and Wallace 2000 p.426) and Raey emphasizes the strategic role that HRD/Training can play during periods of organisational change. According to Raey, the HRD/Training function will only be seen as making a strategic contribution if it is geared to deliver successfully in times of change, and is thus seen as having the capacity to move the organisation forward. However, in practice, as Raey acknowledges, this is not always that easy to achieve given the structural constraints that it faces such as limited resources and stakeholder expectations (for example, managers expecting HRD/Training to be providing staff with immediate priority functional training such as learning how to use a new tool or procedure).

Those in the HRD/Training function can only fulfil such an organisational level role effectively if they have the right kind of access to the right people and the right decision-making forums (Raey 1995). This highlights another important, although not that well documented, theme within HRD/Training literature, that of managing stakeholders. It is suggested that the support and active participation of top management is essential for the development of strategic HRD; that HRD/Training can be integrated into organisational strategy if, and only if, senior management want it to happen ((McCracken and Wallace 2000; Raey, 1995; Garavan et al 1995; Truss 2003). Further, Garavan et al emphasize that *“the extent to which HRD becomes a feature of strategy depends on the ability of top managers to see important environmental trends in HRD terms”* (Garavan et al 1995 p.5).

To illustrate, Garavan (1995; 1998) provides an interesting analysis of the different HRD stakeholders and their respective values, expectations and evaluation criteria. He shows, for example, that top management values concerning HRD are linked to top management's desire to change attitudes and cultural values within the organisation, and HRD is seen as a strategic lever for the achievement of organisational objectives. This compares with the line-managers' perspective which sees the value of HRD as helping to meet the current skill needs of the business, to deliver training and development programmes and to reinforce existing systems and facilitate incremental change (Garavan 1995). In practice, managing differing stakeholders' perspectives might prove to be a tough challenge for the HRD/Training function, especially in the face of contextual constraints and financial restrictions (Grugulis 2007):

“The most inspirational training programme, when accompanied by news of redundancies or wage cuts (unfortunate coincidences of timing which do happen in reality...) is unlikely to prove effective.” (Grugulis 2007 pp:11).

Overall, there appears to be more written about the theoretical and conceptual aspects of strategic HRD than its practical application. Bjornberg’s (2002) article is one of the few that actually examines the ways in which different public sector organisations strategically align their HRD/Training function in practice. However, even in this study, it is interesting to note that ‘strategic HRD’, when translated into practice, is only a partial application of the conceptualised frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter. That is, the description of ‘strategic alignment’ of HRD in the two cases cited refers to the organisations (1) developing an annual ‘strategic training and development plan’ based on, amongst other things, the strategic goals set by the Board, and (2) disseminating Level III evaluation results to top management as a means of informing them on how managers could better support their employees to improve performance and business results (Bjornberg 2002). This study makes an important and explicit link between the role of evaluation, manager enlightenment and organisational results. It achieves, if only implicitly, two things: it emphasises usefully the importance of ‘evidence-based’ data as a means of getting management buy-in to both the value of training and development and the imperative for managers to provide continuing support to employees in improving their performance.

6. Constraints facing Strategic HRD

There is an emerging view that, although the function would have business benefit from becoming 'strategic', HRD/Training's capacity to make such a leap is questionable (Keep 1989; Nijhof, 2004). Kochan (2004) and others suggest that practice might not quite have kept up with the rhetoric (Goodwin et al. 1999; Kochan, 2004; Harrison, 1997). Part of the problem, as with HRD, is that as Garavan et al suggest in their article on the emergence of strategic HRD (Garavan et al, 1995), although conceptual frameworks are well defined (Truss and Gratton 1994), what the concept means in practice is less distinct (Truss et al 2002; Caldwell 2001; Sisson 2001; Storey 1992). As McCracken and Wallace state:

"...in the process of reviewing literature on SHRD ... it became clear that whilst there was an abundance of conceptual work in the area, there was an apparent lack of empirical work on what actually characterises an organisation with a strategic approach to HRD." (McCracken and Wallace, 2000 p.425)

It is suggested that the term 'strategic' is added to the title HRM and HRD to reinforce the idea that the functions are an essential part of the process by which an organisation achieves its business objectives. However, it is also acknowledged that it takes more than a change in title to *"...ensure that the function takes its proper place as an important means of attaining business objectives"* (Reid and Barrington 2001 p. 3).

Further, according to Truss et al (2002), the trend in the literature is to demand that HR directors play a more 'strategic' role in their organisations, because this is regarded as more worthy than what is perceived to be personnel's 'traditional administrative' role.

However, the authors argue, there is some ambivalence over the precise meaning of the term strategic and they question the extent to which it is possible for human resources functions to change their role 'at whim'. Some go further, and suggest that the human resources profession as a whole is in fact facing a crisis of trust and loss of legitimacy amongst its major stakeholders (Kochan 2004). Kochan contests that the decade of effort to represent human resources practice as having a 'strategic' role within organisations has failed to deliver its promised potential of greater status, influence and achievement. Pfau and Cundiff 2002(2002) expresses concern about the limitations of HR's pursuit of a 'strategic' role and suggests that if most of its energy is diverted toward 'being strategic' HR might risk neglecting more routine tasks, some of which may be viewed as critical by some stakeholders.

Although the concept 'strategic HRD/Training' is found in the literature (Garavan 1991; McCracken and Wallace 2000; Harrison 1997) and is well used by HRD/Training practitioners and policy makers, it is not as well documented as 'strategic HRM' (SHRM). Further, it has been suggested that despite the increasing application of the term 'strategic human resource development', some practitioners still have a preference for using to use 'softer' labels such as 'training and development' or 'employee development' to describe their role and work (Harrison, 1993) which contribute to a lack of clarity, if only in the minds of stakeholders about what is on offer. Moving beyond the debate about value and limitations of the label 'strategic HRD', several authors question the extent to which HRD/Training is actually treated as a strategic feature of organisational life (Newell, 2004; Truss et al, 2002, Harrison, 1997).

Tregaskis and Brewster (1998) question the degree to which HRD/Training is seen as a strategic asset and argue that the perception of HRD/Training as a cost as opposed to an investment still tends to dominate in the UK, and both the recent NAO report (2009) and the Government Skills report 2007 cited earlier mentions that cost is still seen as a barrier to learning and development in government organisations (Government Skills 2007). Further, Mabey (2004) commenting the issue of HRD/Training's strategic orientation claims the link between employee development and business strategy is weak. Agreeing with this, Antonacopoulou (2002) argues that despite the hype of HRM and HRD activity in organisations and the efforts of successive governments to change attitudes toward education and training, training and development still tends to be haphazardly implemented, with little indication that it forms part of a rigorous strategic approach embedded in the wider business strategy.

This is confirmed by Newell's (2004) paper that analyses the extent to which management development opportunities, both formal and informal, are seen to support managers in their day-to-day roles and deliver those skills necessary for the future. The study suggests that integrating management development activities with other human resource policies and practices remains problematic and there is a strong perception among managers that decision makers do not view management development in a strategic way.

A CIPD survey report argues that the training and development function needs to demonstrate that it is central to the business and contributes to its strategic development (CIPD 2001). However, the report also acknowledges that the extent to which training has a strategic role within management and the organisation has always been a source of

lengthy debate. The survey explored two areas of possible strategic importance for the role of training - supporting business objectives and supporting organisational development. The results are mixed. For example, 40.6% and 26.9% of the respondents thought that training had a very strategic role in supporting business and organisational development objectives, respectively. On the other hand 45.5% and 63.7% of respondents, respectively, did not answer these questions. In view of this large level of non-response, the results need to be treated with caution. It is likely that the majority of those who did not answer the questions may have worked in organisations in which training does not have a strategic role, and it is therefore important not to overstate the extent to which training is used strategically to support business and organisational objectives. Further, another CIPD HR Survey (CIPD 2003) indicates that although 72% of the survey respondents report an increase in influence with senior colleagues, a significant number are still inclined to see the function as more operational than strategic.

Finally, another example of an empirical analysis of the extent to which HRD/Training role changed to become more strategic, Nijhof's study of Dutch HRD/Training practitioners examined how their role had changed over a seven year period - between 1993 and 1999 – and reported no significant change. Nijhof's study is particularly interesting because it is one of the few empirically based studies of the role of HRD/Training and the way in which it is changing that takes a longitudinal. Nijhof concluded that the Dutch HRD/Training practitioner is the classical type of trainer and the opposite of what so many HRD writers have suggested or promised is the case (Nijhof 2004). However, the findings of this study might be culturally specific and as such have to be treated with a degree of caution.

7. Historical Context of Changing Role of HRD/Training

Given that this study is concerned with examining the ways in which the role of HRD/Training has changed over the past 5-10 years, it is worth noting that the interest in the changing in role of HRD/training is not new. Nearly 40 years ago, Gane wrote: *"The whole field of training is in a rapid state of change: a cliché but true. New needs, new techniques, new people entering the field, all contribute to the ferment... New vocabularies, new systems, new techniques, are put forward every month, sometimes using the same word for different things or different words for the same thing"*. (Gane, 1972 p.11). Gane describe the specific changes taking place in terms of HRD/Training in the early 1970s, especially the investment in technological innovations and aids. Even as early as the 1970s, changes affecting the HRD/Training function were being primarily described in terms of 'new advancements' in tools and technologies. Buckley and Caple (1995) acknowledge that, since its emergence, the HRD/Training function has been subject to a many developments especially in terms of methods of delivery. A number of authors offer useful historical accounts of such developments (Reid and Barrington, 2001; Buckley and Caple, 1995; Romiszowski, 1990; Alagaraja and Dooley, 2003; Jacobs, 2000). For example, Buckley and Caple (1995) provide a particularly informative account of the historical developments within the field of training and development. They suggest that training gained momentum in the 1950s as a response to the evident skills shortage of that period. This led to the 1964 Industrial Training Act and paved the way for a systems approach to training as pioneered by the British Armed Forces. In another useful account of the development of HRD/Training, Reid and Barrington explain how, traditionally, and prior to the widespread adoption of the

principles of classical management theory, little planned training took place (Reid and Barrington 2001).

Others, examining more recent developments in HRD/Training, have suggested that the HRD/Training function continues to be subject to change in terms of its role, status and structure (IPD, 1999; McGoldrick et al 2001 and 2002; Darling et al 2000; Carter et al 2002; Reid and Barrington 2000; Rainbird 1994; Bjornberg 2002; O'Connell 1995; Rothwell 1996; Ginkel et al 1997; Valkeavaara 1998). Specifically, in terms of its role, various studies have been concerned with identifying and categorising the changing roles of HRD/Training as a response to its changing context, with varying degrees of conclusiveness (McLagan, 1996; Rothwell, 1999; Nijhof, 2004; O'Brien & Thompson, 1999; Sloman, 2006).

8. Other Contextual Changes affecting Role of HRD/Training

To deal, next, with other aspects of the changing context affecting the role and practice of HRD/Training, the main types of contextual change referred to in the literature are the impact of technology (especially e-learning) (Rosenberg, 2001; Bloom, 2003; Welsh et al 2003; CIPD 2007), the increased emphasis on metrics and performance measurement (Burrow and Beradinelli, 2003; Becker and Huselid, 2003; Bibby, 2004; Regabulto 1991; Vella et al 1997), and the broadening and diversification of the HRD/Training marketplace (Forrester et al 1995; Garavan et al 2002; CIPD/SKOPE 2001; Eraut 2000; Zagummy 1993). Another change cited in the literature is the increasing dispersal of the HRD/Training role (Wustemann 2002; Carter et al. 2002; Gibb 2003). The literature addressing the issue of dispersal is again located in the broader analyses of changes

affecting the HR function as a whole, can be separated into two categories: that dealing with external dispersal through outsourcing and contracting out (Klas et al 1999; Embleton & Wright, 1998) and that dealing with internal dispersal through delegation of HRD responsibilities from the function to line managers (Gibbs, 2003).

Leaving aside some of the problems with defining the concepts of outsourcing and contracting out (Embleton & Wright 1998), many articles report that it is now accepted practice to outsource/subcontract most areas of business including personnel and HRD/Training (Richbell 2001; Wustemann 2002; IRS Employment Trends 1998, 2001 & 2002; CIPD 2001; Cranfield & Mercer 2000; Carter et al 2002). Outsourcing is seen as offering many benefits including the potential to decrease the costs and to increase flexibility, quality of service and access to outside expertise (Richbell, 2001). However, some have argued that it may well diminish certain types of strategic advantage an organisation might have – for example, outsourcing might encourage an organisation to become too dependent on outside vendors and/or experience industrial relations problems (Belout, Dolan and Saba 2001). Other problems cited include the cost of selecting contractors, choosing which functions to contract out and monitoring the supplier's performance (Harkins, Brown & Sullivan 1997; Embleton & Wright 1998).

In terms of HRD/Training outsourcing, there is limited empirical analysis of its application and success or otherwise in practice. Carter et al., one of the few studies that attempt this as part of looking at the way in which the HRD/Training function is resourced, considered the ways in which outsourcing infiltrated the function (Carter et al. 2002). They suggested that some of the potential limitations of outsourcing HRD/Training programmes include the lack of ongoing support/follow-up support, the

costs of buying in consultancy support, and concerns about transferability of practice from one sector to another.

On *internal dispersal*, it is suggested that the broader organisational trend of decentralisation has been accompanied by a growing trend for devolving greater responsibility for employee development to line managers (Reid and Barrington 2001; Gibb 2003; IRS Management Review 1998; CIPD/SKOPE 2001; Raper et al 1997; Brewster et al. 1997; Tregaskis & Brewster 1998).

Reid and Barrington (2001) propose a framework for the division of the responsibilities for training and development by level of management and Gibb (2003) provides a useful analysis of the advantages and limitations of greater involvement of line managers in HRD activities. Further, Gibb suggests that although the delegation of HRD/Training responsibilities to line managers creates a timely opportunity for the HRD/Training function to operate more strategically, the enlargement of the manager's role in terms of employee development is prone to a number of potential pitfalls such as managers' limited capacity to take on a development role (Gibb 2003). Having considered some of the contextual changes affecting the role of HRD/Training, what follows is a brief comment on some of the literature concerned with its status as an organisational function and as a professional occupation.

9. HRD's Organisational Status

While much of the literature on HRD/Training emphasizes its contribution to employee development and performance improvement (Seyler et al 1998; Mathieu 1992; Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003; Becker and Huselid, 2003; Purcell et al, 2003), some writers have expressed concern about its status within organisations and as a profession (Gold et al 2003; Hamlin 2002; Garavan et al 1993 and 2001; Buckley and Caple 1995; Gibbs 2003). The next section takes the discussion one step deeper to examine how the literature treats some of the specific challenges facing the HRD/Training function in terms of its organisational status.

Various texts document the potential benefits of HRD/Training, from skills development, performance improvement, enhanced employee motivation, less absenteeism and lower staff turnover to contributing to an organisation achieving its strategic objectives (Buckley and Caple 1995; Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003; Purcell et al, 2003). Although the potential and actual contribution of HRD/Training is becoming increasingly accepted and there is more emphasis on evaluating its impact (Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003; Khatri and Budwar, 2002; Hunt and Baruch 2003), some express concern about its perceived low status within organisations (Reid and Barrington 1994; Senker 1992; Hamlin 2002; Garavan et al 1993 and 2001).

Some suggest that part of the problem facing HRD/Training is that, despite the rhetoric about its strategic value – as discussed earlier in the chapter - it is rarely integrated with mainstream operations, is a low operational priority (Keep and Mayhew 1999), does not often appear in strategic plans, is a peripheral activity for most line managers and is

viewed as an expense rather than an investment (Reid and Barrington 2001). Wang and Wang (2007) argue that part of the problem is located in HRD/Training's continued piecemeal approach to personnel development and that this has hindered it from creating the hope for competitive advantage through its workforce.

Buckley and Caple (1995), reflecting on the dilemma HRD/training faces in terms of low status, argue that although it may well be that there is an organisational recognition of the important part that it can play in helping an organisation achieve its objectives, its status and level of resourcing does not always reflect this position. Similarly, Keep (1995) casts doubt on the extent to which HRD/Training's potential value is recognised, citing a number of high profile studies of management education and training in the UK in the late-1980s, suggests that "*...at aggregate level the broad mass of British companies may not yet have accepted the vital importance of training and development activities and acted accordingly*" (Keep 1995).

Further, Buckley and Caple (1995) suggest that an indication of the status of HRD/Training departments or sections is often found by a glance at the organisational chart. In their view, training is usually placed in a box that is remote from the main operational functions or sometimes it shares a box with another function in the general area of personnel. In addition, the level of the managers who 'head' HRD/Training is rarely equivalent to that of other managers with whom they have to plan and negotiate for resources and staff. Buckley and Caple (1995) claim that it is rare to find HRD/Training represented directly in the boardroom.

Concerns about its credibility do affect the status and the effectiveness of the HRD function (Hamlin et al 2002). It is suggested that its 'perceived status' can affect the effectiveness of the HRD function in terms of level of uptake of HRD provision and services (Reid and Barrington 2001; Hamlin 2002) and its jurisdiction and scope of influence (Abbott 1988). Some suggest that, in part, this could be due to HRD's professional and structural proximity to HRM – the former is a subset of the latter. HRM (formerly *Personnel*) historically has had problems of poor image (Herriot 1998; West and Patterson 1998).

A CIPD discussion paper (CIPD 2003b) links the status of training within organisations with concerns about the sustainability of learning from traditional training methods. It suggests that one the reason that the HRD/Training function has status problems is related to its continued clinging to 'traditional' approaches of delivery. Traditional training programmes are seen as having limitations in that they are "*...separate and detached from the context in which real work is produced*" (CIPD 2003 p.4). The paper argues that many training programmes are not supported by processes to enable the 'new knowledge' to be put into practice such that any learning is not embedded or sustained, and serve to undermine the credibility and value of HRD activities.

Developing this theme, and in the context of the public sector, Monteiro (2002) argues that HRD/Training would be more effective if it were used as a tool for institutional rather individual employee capacity building:

"Training is traditionally organised by grouping a number of people who exercise the same function, usually in different institutions, at different territorial levels or in different

areas. After the training, the employees remain isolated in their respective institutions and the possible impact of the training dissipates. The training may have improved the individual, but has not influenced institutional performance at all. At best it added to the frustration of the individual who often decides to leave.” (Monteiro 2002 p.17).

Rather, proposes Monteiro, to make improvements within the public sector the training paradigm has to shift from focusing on the individual to focusing on the whole institution. HRD/Training interventions would thus involve managers, support staff and frontline service providers and aim at moving/changing the organisational culture and practice toward the desired state. This supports the argument proposed by Hamlin (2002) that the HRD/Training function might be more successful (and more valued) if it were effective at the organisation level, that is, as a facilitator of organisation development and organisational change rather than merely being preoccupied with developing the skills and capacity of the individual (Hamlin, 2002). He argues that HRD function’s status problems result in it being excluded from critical organisational change initiatives. This exclusion results in managers having to deal with these initiatives without appropriate HRD support and thus falter. This in turn further reduces the credibility of the HRD function, a situation which Hamlin describes as ‘a vicious circle model’.

Hamlin explains how HRD/Training practitioners can be caught in a double bind. Although an increasing number of HRD/Training activities are being delegated to line-managers, line-managers may not necessarily have the appropriate skills or time to take on the role (Gibbs 2003). Where they ‘fail’ to exercise this responsibility fully they might shift the ‘blame’ onto the HRD function, claiming it did not provide them with adequate or well-informed support when needed.

Similarly, Buckley and Caple (1995) equate the low status image of HRD/Training with its weak position within the structure of the organisations and describe this as a 'chicken-and-egg' trap. They argue that because of its weak status, the HRD/Training function is often in a position where it cannot demand the commitment of senior management, the material resources or a succession of consistently high calibre staff that it needs to make a full contribution to organisational effectiveness. In turn, this further undermines its organisational status.

According to Buckley and Caple (1995) the only way that HRD/Training can break out of this situation is when the senior levels of the organisation are able to experience at first hand the successes of training. This, in turn can be achieved only when there is direct contact between the training department and the organisation's senior decision-makers rather than the system that exists in most organisations where the HRD/Training function is represented by proxy through the HR/Personnel function. The authors suggest that this is only likely occur if and when the HRD/Training function moves away from its traditional place in the organisational structure and becomes a function in its own right, with its own director.

Some writers have identified another factor that possibly contributes to the low image of the HRD/Training function - that relating to the calibre of those recruited into the HRD/Training function. It is suggested that, albeit in the past, those in the HRD/Training function have been those who may not have proved to be amongst the better performers in the operational areas and, in some cases, those who have needed pre-retirement jobs. On the other hand, where 'high flyers' have been selected for training they have

endeavoured to make their stay as short as possible for fear of jeopardizing their career prospects in the operational functions (Buckley and Caple, 1995).

Further, it has been argued that the increasing dispersal of the function, for example, through external outsourcing and internal delegation of responsibilities, is shrinking the role of the HRD function. This shrinkage serves to further 'deskill' those in the HRD function and to thereby further erode their professional status and scope of influence.

Reid and Barrington (2001) argue that in order to gain a secure status within the organisation, the HRD/Training function must satisfy three conditions, namely:

1. Line management should accept responsibility for training
2. The function should be appropriately structured within the organisation – with roles that are perceived as relevant to such aspects as boundary management, organisational culture, operational strategy, management style and the organisation's geography;
3. Specialist training staff should be seen as professionals - trained, with clearly defined roles.

To understand HRD/Training's status overall it is necessary to examine both its standing internal to the organisation and its image outside the organisation. Its organisational and occupational status is interlinked and one influences the other. It is assumed that how HRD/Training is perceived as an area of work generally within society influences how it is treated as an organisational function. Having discussed HRD/Training's status within

the organisation, the following section considers its status as an occupation outside the organisation.

10. HRD's Occupational status

This section begins with a brief examination of the various ways in which the concept has been interpreted, including its inter-relationship with associated concepts such as 'profession' and 'bureaucracy'. The discussion will then move on to consider the specific issue of HRD/Training's occupational/professional status.

'Occupational status' is well established as a field of sociological study (Dingwall and Lewis 1983; Guppy and Goyder 1984; Hodge et al 1966; Turner 2001; Freidson 1986; Freidson 1973; Macdonald 1995). The concept of 'status' as applied to an occupation, profession or area of work is clearly complex and multi-faceted and traditionally, studies of occupational status have been grounded in analyses of social stratification (Goldthorpe and Hope 1970).

The concept 'status' has been analysed in so many different levels and in many different ways. Some authors like Adkins and Swan (1981) use the concepts of 'prestige' and 'status' interchangeably and propose a linkage between 'occupational status' and 'professional status'. Chung and Whitfield (1999) and Larson (1977), along with many others, offer lists of criteria that serve to determine which specific 'occupations' also qualify as 'professions', whilst others make specific connections between 'the acceptance of an occupation as a profession' and its status and prestige (Johnson and Bowman, 1997; Willumsen, 1998; Hatcher, 2006). Hatcher argues that as a 'status category', professions

have a long history, and that over time the basis of professional status has shifted from 'non-secular' to 'economic' (Hatcher 2006).

Other studies of professions and professional groups suggest that there is a correlation between the 'status' of an occupational group and its position and degree of power and influence within the organisation and in relation to the public and other occupations (Johnson, 1972; Willumsen 1998; Conway 2001; Wiles and Barnard 2001; Johnson and Bowman 1997).

On the theme of comparative power and influence, various studies have examined the strategies of 'social closure' or 'exclusion' professions can employ to assert exclusive ownership of specific types of expertise as a means of enhancing their power base and as a means of raising the status and prestige of their practice (Abbott, 1988; Macdonald 1995).

Abbott describes a profession as "...an occupational group with some special skill" (Abbott 1988 p.7) and Fournier makes the distinction that "*Whilst expertise and professions are not synonymous, expertise acquires its authority, partly, through professionalisation*" (Fournier 1999 p. 284). French and Raven (1958) and Pfeffer (1981) in their analysis of power and influence within organisations endorse the idea of knowledge and skills as a source of professional power.

The interconnections between human resources development and knowledge and the issue of knowledge work as a source of power are themes picked up by Grugulis (2007). She proposes that HRD is one of a number of emerging knowledge work occupations/entrepreneurial professions, along with other areas of work such as

information technology and management consultancy. However, she sounds a note of caution:

“There are strong similarities between these workers and the professions...Yet the knowledge claim of these groups is often extremely vulnerable. Software development is not an absolute science but a negotiated order...” (Grugulis 2007 pp:165).

Abbott goes further and suggests that professional power is *“the ability to retain jurisdiction when system forces imply that a profession ought to have lost it”* (Abbott 1988 p. 136). Also, he postulates that the evolution of and interrelationships among professions are determined by how a profession controls its required knowledge and skills. In discussing the rise and fall of various professions over time, Abbott contends that *“the power of the professions’ knowledge systems, their abstracting ability to define old problems in new ways”* is an important factor (Abbott 1988 p. 30).

Grugulis (2007) explores the issue of the potential fragility of the power base of some ‘entrepreneurial professions’ and discusses how some knowledge occupations manage their knowledge power base:

“Consultants’ professionalism is even more contentious and since, here, it is more important to be seen to be an expert than actually to be one, more effort is put into regulating impressions, rhetoric and language games to convince others of the existence of expertise than into developing any actual skills...The trick is always to offer a product that is sufficiently intangible not to become a commodity yet standardised enough to be distinguishable from the services provided by others...”. (Grugulis 2007 pp. 165).

Such analyses raise interesting questions about the types of knowledge and expertise specific and/or exclusive to HRD/Training work and the challenges HRD/Training practitioners face in terms of managing their professional knowledge power base.

On the defining features of a profession, Calhoun (2002) and Mclaughlin and Webster (1998) suggest that professions are characterised, and reproduced and confirmed by specialised forms of training, standards of certification, credentialisation, legal statute, ethics, and the development of self-governing associations. Linking occupational status, skill, education and training, some argue that occupations designated as ‘high prestige’ typically require considerable ability and demand extensive education and training (Macionis 1998; Obermeyer 1994).

Citing Johnson (1972), Knights (1975) argues that the process of professionalisation emerges "*... when an occupation controls the definition of the relationship between itself and its clients*" (Knights 1975 p. 278). In the case of the HRD function, this raises an interesting question about 'who controls' the direction it takes and the nature of the relationships it develops.

Fournier (1999) examines the use of ‘professionalism’ in occupations not traditionally associated with the professions, and suggests that the concept is underpinned by a disciplinary and regulatory logic. Fournier suggests that the appeal of ‘professionalism’ is that it acts as a control mechanism that offers appropriate work identities and behaviours and cautions that the concept of professionalism has acquired a “casual generalisation” (p.281) and is at risk of losing its purchasing power.

Building on the ideas of Freidson (Freidson 1986), Hatcher (2006) extends the existing interpretations of the defining features of a profession and, arguing that in addition to the more accepted ‘powers’ of a profession, it has enormous potential to influence established processes, he questions the extent to which this applies to the established role of HRD/Training:

“Does HRD seek a culture of critical discourse, questioning our assumptions and basic understanding, and exemplify moral idealism or will it remain subsumed under the utilitarianism of business?” (Hatcher, 2006 p. 73).

Given that this study, in part, does question the positioning of HRD/Training as a profession, and given that part of the research is set in the context of the public sector (typically represented a model of the organisation as bureaucracy), it is worth making a couple of observations about the interface between ‘the profession’ and ‘the bureaucracy’. The concepts of occupational status, profession and bureaucracy have a well-established shared history (Davies 1983). Davies offers an interesting juxtaposition of 'bureaucracy' and 'the professional' as two opposing institutional forms (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.1: A Model of Professional/Bureaucracy Conflict (Davies 1983)

Feature	Bureaucracy	Professional
Task	partial, interdependent with others	complete, sole work
Training	short, within the organisation, a specialised skill	long, outside the organisation, a total skill
Legitimation	is following rules	is doing what is known to be correct
Compliance	is supervised	is socialised
Loyalty	to the organisation	to the profession
Career	ascent in the organisational hierarchy	often no further career steps in the organisation

This model has relevance for this study in that it is concerned with an exploration of the HRD function as a 'professional structure' located within the public service, a traditionally 'bureaucratic' organisation. The features identified earlier, the relative autonomy of professional work and the high degree of prestige attached to their activities differentiates professions from other forms of work and worker organisation. However, clearly, in some professions these distinctions have increasingly become blurred as they

have become subordinate to larger bureaucratic structures of decision-making. Davies (1983) cites various studies of doctors, scientists, engineers, accountants and nurses that have focused on the inter-play, adjustments and accommodations between the 'professional' and their respective bureaucratic contexts. Hatcher takes this one step further and predicts future conflict scenario where 'knowledge based' professionals clash with 'profit seeking' managers and owners for power and status (Hatcher, 2006).

On this theme, Willumsen (1998) presents an example of this 'tussle' in practice. He describes the apparent paradox within the teaching profession in Denmark, where developments in teacher education and mandate are seen, on the one hand, to be increasing professional competence and status. On the other hand, some of the changes to and within the profession – educational differentiation, the hierarchical organisation of school management and so on – are seen as undermining the autonomy and the personal and social development of the teacher, and limiting the professionalism and status of the teacher. This raises interesting questions about the nature of the 'fit' between 'the professional' and 'the bureaucratic' aspects of certain types of work, including in the case of this study, the HRD/Training function in public sector organisations.

Finally, the literature includes a range of occupation-specific studies of occupational status, which include, for example, accountants (Arhens & Chapman 2000), sales people (Adkins and Swan 1981), physiotherapists (Turner 2001; Wiles and Barnard 2001), designers (Chung and Whitfield 1999), teachers (Willumsen 1998; Carr 2000; Sparkes 1987; Hendry 1975), academics (Enders 1999; Fairbrother & Mathers 2004; Shattock 2001), university administrators (Conway 2001; Collinson 2006), doctors (Horobin 1983; Hafferty 1988; Lupton 1997), and nurses (Davies 1983; Merton 1962; Johnson and

Bowman 1997; Blomgren 2003; Bureau 2005; Meerabeau 2005). As discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), some of these professions are used as comparators in the HRD/Training organisational and occupational rankings that formed part of the questionnaire survey used in this study. Further, while there are a few analytical articles on the subject of HRD/Training as a profession (Gold et al 2003; Hatcher, 2006), there do not appear to be any empirically-based studies of the HRD /Training profession. It is hoped that this study might contribute to filling this gap.

Reid and Barrington (2001) suggest that one explanation for the paucity of studies of HRD/Training's occupational and professional status might be because of relative 'newness'. They argue that the notion of an 'HRD/Training profession' has only emerged over the past 30-40 years – so it is a young profession compared with others like auditing, nursing, teaching, sales or marketing:

“We are then dealing with what is a relatively recent feature of organisational life, and moreover, one which, often from a zero base, enjoyed spectacular but ephemeral growth”
(Reid and Barrington 2001 p.120).

Nevertheless, there is a striking split between those who confidently proclaim that HRD/Training is a distinct profession (Zahn 2001, Mankin, 2001) and others who argue against this (Gold et al 2003; Hatcher, 2006). Hatcher points out that although HRD/Training has been striving towards professionalisation for over two decades, through the development of professional associations (with accompanying codes of ethics and certifications) and through academic and practitioner journals, books and conferences, it has still not made the grade (Hatcher, 2006).

The literature reviewed suggests that HRD/Training faces many challenges in terms of securing and maintaining its professional status. Gold et al (2003) provide a useful summary of these challenges and identify two specific examples related to the issues of boundaries and entry. They ask ‘...*who negotiates the boundaries and has exclusivity been established?*’ (Gold et al 2003 p. 440) and conclude that while there is probably increasing acceptance of the boundaries of human resources practice, this cannot as yet be said to be exclusive. This is because, although a national professional HR association, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) does exist, it does not yet regulate a licence to practice, and anyone can enter the field without formal training: “...*the variegated character of HRD work continues to allow the operation of a free and ‘unsheltered’ market*” (Gold et al 2003 pp: 441).

11. Concluding Comments

This chapter provides an overview of a number of select themes in the HRD/training literature including the complex and changing nature of ‘HRD’ and ‘strategic HRD/Training’. Further, it suggests that while there may be an emerging consensus about the two concepts how they translate into practice is questioned. As this chapter show, HRD/Training is under pressure to demonstrate its organisational relevance and organisational value. Further, while there is some consensus that it adds value in terms of individual skills and knowledge development and that the role of HRD/Training is changing in response to its contextual environment, the extent to which it is treated as a strategic actor is contested. At an organisational level, HRD/Training as a function is hampered by how it is trying to respond to a variety of stakeholder expectations while be

subject to a range of structural constraints such as senior managers concern with levels of expenditure.

Finally, while a variety of themes feature in the literature on HRD, delivery methods and techniques (including 'how-to' manuals) tend to dominate, with fewer systematic, empirical analyses of the role and status of the HRD/Training function. As Garrick states:

“In the field of practice of HRD, it appears that many researchers are either satisfied with the literature’s concentration upon technical aspects of training and learning at work, or are lured (directly or indirectly) by their institutions or outside funding bodies to write about ‘exemplary practices’ (Garrick 1998 p.3).

There is disappointingly little work done on the ways in which the HRD function’s status as an occupation has developed and it has changed over time. In this context, Gold et al (2003), in one of the few articles critically assessing the status of HRD as a profession conclude:

“HRD professionals have so far faced a disorderly history, and one that looks set to continue in to the near future.” (Gold et al 2003 p: 451)

The next chapter discusses the methodology underpinning this study. It includes an examination of the research aims and methods used as well as their limitations.

Chapter 3

Research Approach & Methodology

“...the role of the scholar is...to observe, analyse, critique, and disseminate. This is important work, and we should never take our eyes off it. However, when an academic field...deals in a domain that vitally affects societal well-being, then that academic field must enter the world of practical affairs. Without being co-opted, it must strive for influence and impact. That is our challenge.” (Hambrick 1994 pp.16)

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the main features of the research methodology employed within this study. The chapter includes a description of the research aim, and the specific research questions and hypotheses underpinning this study. Also, it discusses the main research tools employed during the study (job advertisements analysis, a questionnaire survey, focus group meetings and interviews), and comments on the effectiveness of these in promoting an understanding of the research questions.

The research process incorporated a number of interconnected elements as illustrated in Figure 3.1: Research Process Web. The research aim, research philosophy and the conceptual framework all formed part of the research process and were seen as having an interdependent relationship, and in turn, all informed the research methodology and research tools employed. The following section begins with a brief description of the research aim and specific research questions and hypotheses underpinning this study.

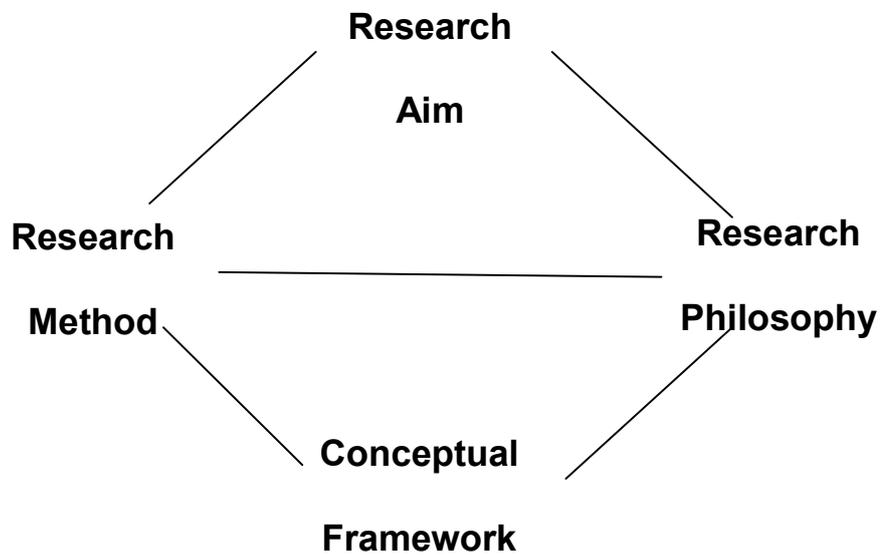


Figure 3.1: *Research Process Web*

2. Research Aim

This research aims to examine the role, functions and status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations. Specifically, it seeks to identify and analyse change in HRD/Training's role over the past 5-10 years at the point at which the study began, and to consider how its status is perceived and what factors contribute to this perception.

3. Research Questions & Hypotheses

Three main research questions, emerging from the literature review, underpinned this study. Listed in Table 3.1, these are focussed on understanding perceptions of the current role and status of the HRD/Training function and the ways in which its role is seen as having changed (Table 3.1: Research Questions).

Table 3.1: Research Questions

1. How do UK public sector HRD/Training practitioners, HR professionals and managers perceive HRD/Training's organisational and occupational status, and what accounts for this?
2. In what ways, if any, is the role and position of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisation perceived as having changed over the past 5-10 years?
3. In what ways, if any, is the HRD/Training function is seen as having become strategic, and what accounts for this?

These research questions were translated into three main hypotheses – these reflect and represent a strong strand in the literature in this field. The three hypotheses are:

1. The organisational status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations is perceived as being strong and its occupational standing is high.
2. The role of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations is perceived as having changed significantly over the past 5-10 years.

3. The role and position of the HRD/training function in UK public sector organisations has become strategic over the past 5-10 years.

Having introduced the research aim, research questions and hypotheses, the next section will briefly describe the specific research philosophy that influenced this study and its methodology.

4. Research Philosophy

To ensure that a research approach is internally robust, all researchers must be aware of and explicit about their philosophical and epistemological foundations (Hoskin 2002; Remenyi et al 1998). Many have argued that every researcher is influenced by their individual contexts and world-views and this invariably affects the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions they hold and these in turn affect decisions concerning the research process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Guba 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Remenyi et al 1998; Roberts 1993; Mason 1996).

As a researcher, being attuned to and explicit about one's epistemological position at the start of any research process is seen as important in social and organisational research generally but even more so in the case of studies of human resource development. This is because unlike other social science disciplines such as sociology or psychology which have been the subject of long standing debate about their philosophical and methodological boundaries (Giddens 1996), human resource development (HRD) is a comparatively young discipline within the field of business and management studies, and is still working on establishing its philosophical and methodological parameters (McGoldrick et al 2001). We will return, later in the chapter, to the issue of how far

HRD/Training can be presented and treated as a discipline in its own right and opposed to an activity that is multi-disciplinary but not sufficiently grounded in its own distinct body of knowledge to be considered a separate discipline.

Opinion within the academic and research community is divided about what constitutes appropriate methodology in terms of the study of human resources issues including HRD/Training – this mirrors the wider, well-established debate about what constitutes 'an acceptable approach' in social science research (Giddens 1996); Trigg 1997; Mingers 2000, 2001). Although sometimes presented as complex, the debate can be, as so clearly explained by Robson (2002), at its simplest level, reduced to a bipolar one of positivism versus anti-positivism. The comparative values of each position (which actually comprise an array of perspectives) are well established (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Chau, 1986; Robson, 2002).

In brief, positivism is based on the premise that the world is external and objective, the observer is independent and science is value-free. Further, it demands that social sciences research parallel that of the natural sciences and argues that it should be replicable, objective and additive, converging on truth through objective argument and with scope for comparing data (Wilk 2001; Robson 2002). Hoskin (2002) has argued that positivism's strength lies in its definition of parameters, controlling of extraneous variables and replicability and its weakness is its abstraction from 'the real world' and the 'reflexive complexity of human action'. On the other side, anti-positivists have argued that social science cannot be value-free, that it arises out of the exercise of interpretative faculties and that in itself results in a definite set of values and a distinctive way of seeing human beings (Bhaskar 1992; Trigg 1997).

The philosophical perspectives of positivism and anti-positivism find a practical outlet in qualitative and quantitative data generation and analysis (Robson 2002). In terms of social and organisational research, quantitative methodology is driven by a commitment to scientific measurement - it values quantification, standardisation, and precision and takes a relatively mechanistic approach. By comparison, qualitative methodology derives its rationale and energy from phenomenological and constructionist thought, amongst others - it values experiential data and takes a flexible interpretive approach – see Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Main Features of Quantitative & Qualitative Methods

(source: Cassell & Symon 1994)

Quantitative Method	Qualitative Method
Quantification	Interpretation
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Standardisation	Flexibility
Process	Outcome

In practice, both quantitative and qualitative methods serve as a blanket term for a variety of research techniques and both approaches are prone to a number of inherent constraints (Cassell and Symon 1994) some of which will be touched upon later in this chapter.

This broader philosophical and methodological debate has been replayed in the HRD/Training research arena. To illustrate this point, many have argued that there is no one single way of viewing HRD/Training research (McGoldrick et al 2001; Garavan 1998). For example, Darling et al (2001) argue for more positivist research and state that there is a need for more quantitative data about the HRD function and practitioners. Khatri and Budhwar (2002), Hunt and Boxall (1998), McGoldrick et al (2002) and Garavan et al (1998) contest this view. They argue that human resources as an emerging discipline would benefit from more open-ended research to balance and corroborate the highly structured data of positivistic studies.

It is common to have the positivist and anti-positivist presented as two opposing positions with irreconcilable differences. However, Lee (1991), Cresswell (2003), Mingers (2001) and Wilk (2001) and others challenge this binary way of viewing social science and suggest they can be mutually supportive and compatible. Wilk (2001), in attempting to fight off what he calls 'theoretical fundamentalism', advocates 'tolerant pluralism' and an approach which includes elements that are both objective and comparable as well as those that are contextual and subjective:

"Between the extremes, it is possible to see how separating objectivity from subjectivity impoverishes both". (Wilk 2001 p.309).

Further, and as a way of reconciling the constraints of the bipolar philosophies of the social sciences, some have argued for a multi-paradigmatic approach (Morgan 1990; Hassard and Pym 1990; Wilk 2001). This allows concepts to be drawn from a diverse range of disciplines and paradigms, and gives researchers scope to adopt whatever method fits the situation or problem. This is a persuasive perspective that had strongly influenced this study. In terms of epistemology, this study has adopted a pluralist orientation and multi-methods approach. The mix of methods – in this case, analysis of job advertisements, use of a questionnaire survey, use of focus groups and interviews, is intended to work with the inherent strengths and limitations of each approach by facilitating methodological and data 'triangulation' (Smith, 1975; Silverman, 2000) and thereby increase the validity and reliability of the research process as a whole (Wilk 2001).

Finally, before moving onto a discussion of the conceptual frameworks underpinning this study, a brief comment about the extent to which HRD is a discipline in its own right, or only a sub-set of HRM, itself an emerging discipline. While there is an ongoing debate about whether or not HRD should be treated as a discipline or simply as an inter-disciplinary area of activity (Swanson, 1996, 2000; Holton 1996; Kuchinke, 2002; McGoldrick et al, 2002; Ruona, 1999; Lynham, 2000; Galagan, 1986; Chalofsky, 2004), McGoldrick et al (2002) and Chalofsky (2004) identify that part of the problem HRD faces in being accepted as a discipline in its own right is that unlike most other applied disciplines, HRD has yet to establish its distinctive disciplinary base. Chalofsky argues

that at the present, HRD is constrained by the fact that there is no universal agreement about HRD's distinguishing theoretical base (Chalofsky, 2004), while others suggest that the diversity of HRD practice renders it atheoretical (Swanson 1996; Holton, 1996). Swanson takes atheoretical to mean that it lacks a thorough, scholarly or scientific basis for the ideas or products it promotes (Swanson, 2000).

In its defence, Swanson argues that HRD is a young and emergent discipline, a work in progress and "...*HRD is as much a discipline as many of the disciplines we often defer to*" (Swanson, 2000 p.4). He cites Sociology as a comparator and suggests that HRD, like Sociology, draws on a range of psychology-based, economics and systems theories for its own unique purpose, albeit different from HRD's purpose. Further, he argues that HRD must continue to grow and mature as a discipline (Swanson, 2000). Having discussed the broader methodology and philosophical aspects of HRD/Training research, the next section briefly describes the conceptual framework underpinning this study of the role, position and status of the HRD/Training function.

5. Conceptual Framework

One of the main research questions of concern to this study is the strategic nature of the HRD/Training function. With this in mind, Garavan's conceptualisation of strategic HRD provided a useful framework for identifying the essential components of strategic HRD/Training. This framework was selected for use in this study because it is well-constructed, well-established and has been used by others as a basis for analysis of strategic HRD (McCracken & Wallace 2000a, 2000b).

Garavan (1991) proposed that in order for HRD to be 'strategic' it needed to incorporate nine core features: integration with organisational mission and goals, top management support, environmental scanning, HRD plans and policies, line manager involvement and commitment, existence of complementary HRM activities, expanded trainer role, recognition of culture, and emphasis on evaluation.

Garavan's framework was modified slightly to reflect the range of features of strategic HRD/Training represented in the literature and reworked into one incorporating ten defining features instead of the nine in Garavan's original model (Table 3.3). The specific elements included in the adapted framework were the addition of: 1. *HRD/T's relationship with corporate strategy* (that is, the extent to which its focus and activities took account of and were responsive to established and emergent corporate strategy), 2. *HRD having a feedback loop to senior management* (that is, the extent to which HRD/Training systematically reports back the impact of its activities to senior management and is adapts its approach and priorities to reflect their specific and possibly changing concerns); and, 3. *HRD/Training attuned to stakeholder perceptions & expectations*. Further, this adapted model informed the design of sections of the questionnaire survey and the ten dimensions of the framework at described briefly, below in Table 3.3..

Table 3.3: An Adapted Model of Strategic HRD

Features of Adapted Model	Description of Features
1. HRD/T goals & plans aligned with corporate strategy	HRD/T's goals and plans correspond to and are in line with the organisation's corporate strategy and strategic priorities.
2. Top management support	Top management recognises the strategic value of the HRD/T function and supports it appropriately in terms of resourcing.
3. Scans Environment	Takes a wider perspective and looks for and anticipates emerging opportunities and threats to its work and that of the organisation.
4. State of function's goals, policies & plans	HRD/Training goals, policies & plans are long-terms, clear and consistent.
5. Partnership with managers	HRD/T has a strong working partnership with managers in terms of meeting the development needs of their staff.
6. Relationship with HR function	HRD/T has a strong, closely aligned and consistent working relationship with the HR in terms of priorities and delivery.
7. Relationship with corporate strategy	HRD/ supports and shapes corporate strategy especially in identifying emerging and future employee and organisational capability needs.
8. Feedback loop with senior managers	HRD/Training systematically & regularly reports back to senior managers the impact of its activities & adapts its approach to reflect their specific and possibly changing concerns.
9. Multi-level Evaluations	HRD/T undertakes systematic and planned evaluations at the level of individual learners experience, learning transfer & organisational impact.
10. Attuned to stakeholder perceptions	HRD/T is in touch with perceptions of and expectations of it, and responds to any emerging concerns.

While most aspects of the adapted model may be clear, it might be worth offering a brief explanation for the inclusion of 'environmental scanning'. According to Garavan, an important condition for HRD/Training's development of a coherent set of strategies, policies and practices is an understanding of the environmental context in which it and the organisation of which it is a sub-unit operates (Garavan, 2007). He suggests HRD/Training professionals need to engage in continuous environmental scanning and to develop an understanding of how elements of the external environment affect HRD/Training activities. Building on this, McClean and McClean (2001) cite particular examples from the wider environment which can affect HRD practice including national workforce development policies, the demand for qualifications, approaches to curriculum development, and funding arrangements, and emphasize the importance of the HRD/Training function being equipped and proactive about responding to such developments.

The second conceptual framework that was found to be particularly useful was that of 'organisational fit' as proposed by Miles and Snow (Miles and Snow 1990; Horowitz 1999). This framework was described in Chapter Two: Literature Review, so the details of the framework will not be repeated here apart from restating that Miles and Snow argued that successful organisations are those that have a strong fit between their operational arrangements, their organisational goals and the broader contextual environment. The original model differentiates between four types of 'fit': minimal, tight, early and fragile. For purposes of this research, and largely driven by the need of having a clear and simple framework for use in the survey, these four 'types' were re-

grouped to three types of *'fit'* - *'tight fit'*, *'loose fit'* and *'fragile fit'* - and these new categorisations were used to assess survey respondents' perceptions of the *fit* between the HRD/Training function and the organisation . At the point of considering the model's suitability as a model for use in this study, it was not entirely clear how far the fourth type of fit in Miles and Snow's original model – *early fit* – would have resonance in with the state of the public sector HRD/Training function given its existing structural constraints such as being part of a formal, regulated bureaucracy with limited autonomy and resources. It was hard to imagine under what circumstances a public sector HRD/T function could be said to match the *early fit* dimension, characterised as the organisation or function discovering or articulating a new pattern of strategy, structure or process frequently resulting in record levels of performance and a competitive breakthrough.

The *'loose fit'* category corresponds to the *'minimal fit'* type and refers to those cases, for example, where the HRD/Training function has an intermittent and moderate degree of alignment, integration and responsiveness to the organisation, its goals, business strategy and broader environment, or where the HRD/Training function has a moderate, variable and loose relationship with the broader human resource management (HRM) function . *'Tight fit'* corresponds to Miles and Snow's *'tight fit'* type and refers to the case where the HRD/Training function has, for example, a strong and consistent degree of alignment, integration and responsiveness to the organisation, its goals, business strategy and broader environment, or a strong and consistent partnership with managers within its organisation. The third type – *'fragile fit'* – corresponds to Miles and Snow's *'fragile fit'* and refers to the state, for example, where the HRD/Training function has very weak or no alignment, integration or responsiveness to the organisation and its internal and

external environment and conditions, rendering it vulnerable to environmental shifts and prone to the risk of unravelling (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: The Adapted Strategic Fit HRD/Training Framework

Type of Fit/ Features of Strategic HRD/Training	Tight Fit tightly integrated, strategic, secure	Loose Fit loosely integrated, non- strategic, vulnerable	Fragile Fit non-integrated, peripheral, vulnerable
1. Partnership with managers	Strong, consistent, active	Loosely structured, variable	Weak or non-existent
2. Feedback Loop	Strong, consistent, well-established	Moderate, variable, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
3. Top management support	Strong, consistent, active	Moderate, intermittent, variable	Weak or non-existent
4. Alignment with HR	Strong, consistent, active	Moderate, variable, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
5. Relationship with corporate strategy	Interdependent, two-way flow (shapes & supports)	Dependent, one-way flow (supports but does not shape)	Independent, now flow
6. HRD goals, policies, plans	Long term, focused, well structured	Short-term, focused, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
7. Alignment with corporate strategy	Strong, consistent, active	Loose, intermittent, variable	Weak or no alignment
8. Environmental scanning & responsiveness	Frequent, active, responsive	Intermittent, reactive, partial	Rare or never
9. Stakeholder perceptions of role	Strategic, organisation development & change architect	HRD/Training specialist	Training events administrator
10. Evaluations	Consistently at level of learning transfer & organisational impact	Individual reactions to training & development events	Infrequent, ad hoc, weak or non-existent

In terms of the use of the concepts of ‘alignment, integration and responsive’, these are intended to denote the idea of there being a close relationship between HRD/Training and various aspects of its business context. They simply refers to the need for the HRD/Training function to being attuned to, in line with, consistent with, supportive of important aspects of the business, and being proactive in responding to any emerging business needs. According to Semler, alignment is the level of congruence between organisational processes and the level to which HRD practice elicits behaviours in line with these processes (Semler, 1997). Truss and Gratton describe it as the extent to which

HRD contributes to an organisational culture that supports organisational goals, objectives and strategy (Truss & Gratton, 1994). Having discussed the main conceptual frameworks underpinning this study, the next section describes the specific research methods and tools employed.

6. Research Method: Tools & Techniques

This study employed four main types of research tools to investigate the given research questions (Table 3.5): firstly, a comparative analysis of HRD/Training job advertisements for two time periods (1996-7 and 2003-4); secondly, a survey questionnaire targeted at three sets of respondents (HRD/Training specialists, HR/Personnel practitioners and managers); thirdly, focus group discussions with a mix of respondents; and finally, a set of interviews with HRD/Training practitioners.

Table 3.5: Linking Research Questions to Types of Data

Research Questions	Data Source	Type of Data
1. How do UK public sector HRD/Training practitioners, HR professionals and managers perceive HRD/Training's organisational and occupational status, and what accounts for this?	Questionnaire Survey	Quantitative; comparative; subjective indicators
	Focus groups/interviews	Qualitative, comparative; subjective indicators
2. In what ways, if any, is the role and position of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations perceived as having changed over the past 5-10 years?	Job advertisements analysis	Quantitative; comparative; objective indicators
	Questionnaire survey	Quantitative; comparative; subjective indicators
3. In what ways, if any, is the HRD/Training function seen as having become strategic, and what accounts for this?	Job advertisements analysis	Quantitative; comparative; objective indicators
	Questionnaire survey	Quantitative; comparative; subjective indicators

In terms of the sequence, the research process began, as would be expected, with a literature review. This was followed by an analysis of HRD/Training job advertisements, a series of focus group meetings and some individual interviews. Following this, work was done on the questionnaire survey - a pilot survey and then the main survey. Finally, a series of interviews and debriefing sessions with a sample of survey respondents were conducted as a means of ‘testing out’ and authenticating the research findings (Figure 3.2). What follows next is an account of how each of the research tools were developed and applied, beginning with the HRD/Training job advertisements analysis.

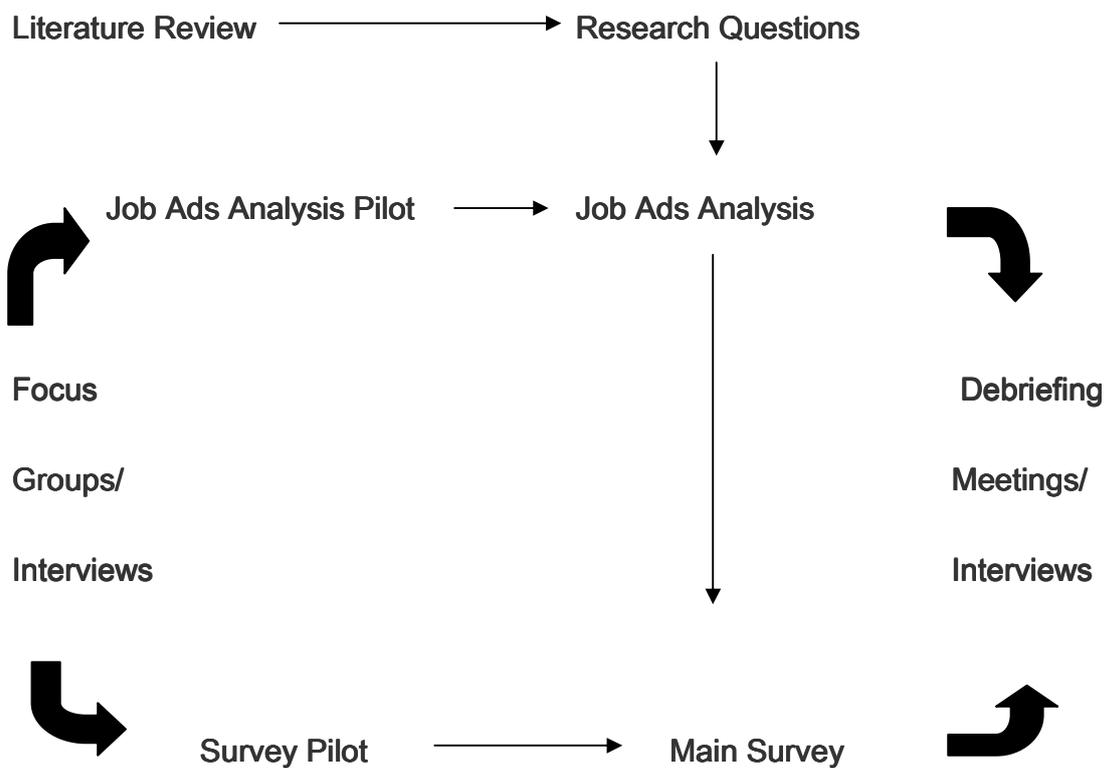


Figure 3.2: Research Methods – an integrated approach

7. Job Advertisements Analysis

7.1 Overview

All the HRD/Training job advertisements – a total of 763 posts - featured in the appointments section of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) *People Management* journal were analysed. The jobs advertisements examined spanned two time periods: September 1996 to March 1997, and September 2003 to March 2004. Each job advertisement was assessed against 18 dimensions including job title, job designation, sector, salary, location, reporting line, qualifications specified, key tasks, focus, experience/expertise required, and qualities specified. Each advertisement was scrutinized and the data to each of the 18 dimensions was identified and recorded onto a bespoke database.

As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the analysis of job advertisements provided interesting data about the HRD/training role. Job advertisements were chosen because, it was felt they served as a summary of the core features of a given job, its position and its status within the organisation, and can serve as a useful indicator of the priorities and concerns of the organisation as well as 'what matters' with reference to the specific job in question. Pragmatically, they were in the public domain and as such they were relatively straight-forward to access. As acknowledged by Matthews and Redman (1994), Sambrook (1998) and Hartog et al (2007) job advertisements do have potential value as a source of data about the role and perceived value of an area of work:

“The recruitment advertisement is a mass media communication and serves not only to state job requirements and notify vacancies but also as a platform for the transmission of organisational messages... If the organisation holds respect for the profession then there will be a commensurate reflection in the status of the position advertised. This is also likely to be reflected by the recognition of individual standing in the professional body concerned and probably in appropriate formal qualification. A number of dimensions that are also important in judging professional status are concerned with the person specification, i.e. the nature of the individual and the personal characteristics that the applicant is to possess.” (Matthews and Redman, 1994 p.30).

Hartog et al study of job advertisements seeking to recruit business leaders (Hartog et al, 2007), used a single source of data (The Times/The Sunday Times) published every Thursday and Sunday respectively to collect data over a 15 month period (from December 2001 to March 2003). The researchers selected a time period that would provide a sizeable and relatively stable set of advertisements, and ended up with a sample of 941 advertisements. In terms of analysis, they mapped the terminology that organisations use to advertise for leadership positions, and particularly focused on identifying leadership words and phrases that reflected traits, behaviours, attributes and qualities or qualifications relevant to a leadership role. Unlike the Hartog et al study (2007), this study of the HRD/Training job advertisement offers a comparative element - analysing HRD/Training posts advertised in 1996-7 and in 2003-4 – as a way of examining the extent to which the HRD/Training role and function changed and/or stayed the same in the two time periods.

7.2 Data Coding & Designing Data Logging Template

It took several attempts to get a data logging template that was both sufficiently focused in terms of scope and comprehensive enough to capture meaningful data. With regards to how the various measures were identified, the process started with 25 HRD/Training job advertisements being read through carefully and key word and repeated key words/categories being highlighted. This information was used to identify a number of dimensions as the basis for analysis of each job advertisement. Each of the dimensions was coded and set up on a bespoke template developed using Filemaker Pro. The tool was tested/piloted using a further 25 job advertisements and various adjustments were made to the template. For example, the piloting exercise showed that certain categories of data were easier to record in a fixed list while others were better suited to a free entry.

The final template comprised 18 measures: source (date of magazine; page number of the advertisement), job title, job designation, number of posts, salary, sector, location, reporting line, key tasks, focus, experience/expertise required, four specific experience categories (Investors in People, Diversity, Working with Contractors and E-learning), qualifications, qualities specified, and general comments together with. Some categories were 'fixed' and mutually exclusive such as sector, focus and location, others were 'open' such as job title and designation, and others were fixed but not mutually exclusive such as 'qualifications', 'experience/expertise required' and 'qualities specified'.

7.3 Identifying the Data Source

A number of journals and magazines were examined and *People Management* was eventually chosen as the main data source. *People Management* magazine was chosen mainly for pragmatic reasons - it was accessible, well-established (it is the CIPD's

official magazine for HR professionals) and carried a good representation of HRD/Training posts from all sectors. In addition, given its wide circulation, it was easier to locate consecutive back copies of the *People Management* than other potential data sources – getting hold of back copies was important given that the intention was to examine advertisements from two periods of time to identify any changes in the content of HRD/Training job advertisements,

Other media were considered including electronic job search sites such as the one run by *Personnel Today* and *jobsearch.com*, and publications such as '*Training Magazine*' and '*Public Sector HR*' magazine. However, these were not considered appropriate for the needs of this survey because downloading a large numbers of job advertisements from websites was a time-consuming and not entirely reliable process. In addition, tracking down copies of old job advertisements on websites, especially from seven years ago, although attempted was not successful. Further, publications such as *Training Magazine* and *Public Sector HR* were not chosen because they were supplements to other magazines and only carried a small range of job advertisements, too few for the purposes of this study. Attempts were even made to contact two HR recruitment firms in the expectation that they might be a source of HRD/Training job advertisements. Unfortunately, these firms were unable to 'locate' an appropriate 'agent' to deal with this 'rather unique' enquiry and after several telephone calls and after leaving a few unanswered messages, this endeavour was abandoned in favour of magazine based job advertisements.

In the end, job advertisements in 22 editions of *People Management* magazine were examined. Eleven of the editions were from the period September 1996 to March 1997. Eleven were from the period September 2003 to March 2004 and matched the date of the editions for 1996-7 as closely as possible to allow for any seasonal variations in advertising practice - this was an issue that Hartog et al (2007) also took into account in their study of leadership job advertisements. The two sets of dates, 1996-1997 and 2003-2004, separated by a seven year period, were chosen to allow a sufficient amount of time to have passed to allow change, if any, affecting the advertising of HRD/Training posts to have become established and visible. A separation of seven years was considered a reasonable period of time in which any change might have become apparent.

7.4 Data Logging Process

A total of 3348 posts in 22 editions of the *People Management* from 1996-7 and 2003-4 were examined. Every job advertisement in each edition was scanned and all HRD/Training related posts were identified. Each HRD/Training job advertisements was read carefully, twice. Relevant key words and phrases were highlighted. A new fiche was used for each post analysed. The data was logged onto the fiche following the order in which the categories appeared on the template.

Some observations on the data logging process included the following:

1. Categories were created for each job title and job designation featured in the job advertisements. Minor variations to frequently occurring job titles and job designations were excluded and any cases were logged under the generic job title.

For example, there were many variations to the title Sales Trainer such as 'Trainer in Sales' or 'Senior Sales Trainer' – these were recorded under the main, generic title of Sales Trainer.

2. The salary range for each post was noted to the nearest round figure. Not all of the posts advertised featured a salary range. Some only gave a single figure and some indicated that the salary was accompanied by a range of other explicitly stated benefits such as a car or health cover. Such additional benefits were not recorded.
3. The jobs were classified by region. The regions were categorised as: London, the South East, the South West, Midlands, North West, North East, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Various (jobs based at multiple sites), Elsewhere (countries outside the UK) and Not Stated.
4. The jobs were categorised into private and public sector posts. The public sector posts were further subdivided into the following groups: Health, Emergency Services, Local Authority, Education, Civil Service, and Voluntary and 'Other'. A category of 'Not Stated' was set up for posts where the sector was not entirely clear or not specified.
5. Qualifications were separated into four categories: 'HR/HRD/CIPD' (professional), 'Academic' (undergraduate and post-graduate degrees), 'Management' and 'Sector Specific' (such as Finance, Sales or Medical) qualifications. An entry was made where one of these categories of qualification

was specified as being 'required', 'desirable' and/or 'the applicant is working their way toward the qualification'.

6. The category of 'Focus of Post' was divided into 'Operational', 'Strategic', 'Both' and 'Not Specified' options. It was felt that it would be useful to identify whether or not the post, as written up in the job advertisement, would be considered as mainly operational ('Operational' option), mainly strategic ('Strategic' option), or a mix of both operational and strategic ('Both' option). A 'Not Specified' option was set up for cases where there was insufficient information on which to base a decision.

A post was categorised as 'Operational' if most of the duties and responsibilities described were concerned with the deliver or the management of the delivery of HRD/Training. A post was recorded as 'Strategic' if most of the duties and responsibilities were concerned with strategic activity such as strategy and policy formulation, where the post holder would have corporate wide responsibility for HRD strategy and a comparable budget and would be in a position to influence the future direction of the organisation, where there was a requirement for the job holder to work with senior managers and the Management Board, and where the reporting line was to the CEO or Management Board. A post tended to be categorised as 'Strategic' if the term 'strategic' was used in the advertisement and if the rest of the job specification was consistent with the former indicators.

Some posts used the phrase 'this post has strategic potential' or 'this post is both strategic and operational', or 'this post has the scope to make a strategic impact'.

However, usually what followed was more about delivery and the management of delivery rather than being focused on strategic activity. Such posts were categorised as 'Operational'.

A post was categorised as "Both" where the post had elements of strategic and operational activity. For example, in cases where the post holder would be responsible for HRD policy and strategy, overseeing the development and implementation of training plans, managing significant resources and teams of HRD practitioners, but perhaps would only be reporting to the Head of HR/Personnel and would have limited scope for influencing the wider organisational strategy.

In general, this was the toughest category to process. In some cases, it was difficult deciding whether the post needed to be categorised as 'Strategic' or 'Both'. For a small number of posts, there was only a fine line separating them from being in either category.

7. The 'Reporting Line' was intended to serve as another indicator of the status of the post. The assumption made was that the greater the seniority of the person to whom the prospective job-holder would report, the higher the organisational status of the post. There was a specific interest in finding out what percentage of HRD/Training posts reported to the Board and or/ CEO, with the assumption being that a post would be seen as strategic if the post-holder reported to the Board and/or CEO. Many of the job advertisements did not specify the reporting line. However, in cases where it was specified, the information was entered onto

- the database. For purposes of simplicity, cases of minor variations in titles such as 'Director of Personnel' and 'Director of HR' were all recorded in the sub-category 'Head of HR/Personnel'. Instances of 'Director of HRD' and 'Director of Training' were recorded in the sub-category "Head of HRD".
8. The category "Main Tasks" was divided into 14 sub-categories. The latter were drawn from the pilot analysis of job advertisements. The sub-categories chosen were the tasks most frequently cited in the pilot analysis. It was seen as particularly important to include the categories of 'Policy/Strategy', Change Management', and 'Organisation Development' because these were considered to be important indicators of the HRD/Training role operating strategically. It was useful to include the sub-category 'Research' because some authors have suggested a link between the status of the HRD/Training function and its involvement in research (Hamlin 2002).
 9. The category 'Expertise' was divided into 20 sub-categories. Again, these were derived from the pilot analysis of the job advertisements and were chosen because they were most frequently cited in the advertisements as necessary or desirable for the post. Clearly, many other skills and experiences were mentioned in the advertisements and these were not included in the sub-categories in order to keep the data manageable.
 10. The final category, 'Qualities' was divided into 20 sub-categories and these were determined by using the same process as for the previous two categories.

7.5 Data Collation and Data Analysis

Once the data input was complete, the data for all the advertisements was surveyed and collated into sub-sets for the period 1996-7 and 2003-4. Although most of the posts in magazines were human resources and/or HRD/Training focused, there were a very small number of posts in some of the editions that were not directly HR or HRD/Training related. This includes advertisements for jobs of a purely secretarial or technological or sales nature. These were excluded from the figures for the HR/HRD/training posts.

Once all the entries had been made, the data for each category was summarised and systematically analysed, category by category. Comparisons were made between the data for 1996-7 and 2003-4 and between the public and private sectors. The data for each sector were cross-tabulated with the two time periods, and subjected to a chi-squared test, to see if there were any significant variations in the results.

In summary, this process confirmed that although job advertisements tend to be impressionistic and limited in the data they provide, they can offer a succinct synopsis of what the organisation expects of prospective post-holders. Alternative sources of data such as job descriptions, person specifications and job related competency framework were considered as the basis of the analysis. Although the value of each was recognised – for example, job descriptions can offer useful information about the context of the post and how it relates to other aspects of the organisation, and give a detailed breakdown of the skills, abilities and qualities being sought – alternative options were rejected. As acknowledged by others (Sambrook 1998), it was felt that most job descriptions are much lengthier than job advertisements and as such more complex in terms of analysis and comparison, and the process would have been much more complex and time-intensive.

Further, the intention was to compare changes in the way in which the HRD/Training role was described and getting access to job descriptions from seven years ago was not viable. Having described the job advertisements analysis process, what follows is an account of the questionnaire survey that was used.

8. The Questionnaire Survey

8.1 An Overview

To complement the data derived from the analysis of the job advertisements, a questionnaire survey was used to tap into the perceptions of the role and status of the HRD/Training function, details of which will be given later in this section. Briefly, the survey provided a set of interpretative data which although presented in quantitative terms in the analysis, nevertheless was derived from respondents' subjective interpretations (opinion and feelings) of the role and status of the function - Bryman & Bell provide a useful account of the ways in which qualitative method can be employed to derive quantitative data (Bryman & Bell 2003). As many authors have argued, social and organisational reality is 'socially constructed' and any attempt to understand social and organisational phenomena needs to tap into 'lived experience' and perceptions (Burger & Luckman 1967; Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Burrell & Morgan 1979). As a reminder, the survey, focus groups and interviews were aimed at looking at the perceptions of the HRD/Training function in public sector organisations.

8.2 The Pilot Survey

A pilot questionnaire was used to test the robustness of the survey instrument and the feedback from the pilot informed the design of the main survey. The design of the pilot survey (specifically the types of questions used) was based on information derived from a small number of interviews with HRD/Training practitioners, and focus group meetings involving HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and line managers.

The pilot survey was disseminated to 25 respondents in central and local government organisations and was followed up by a small number of face-to-face and telephone interviews as a means of getting feedback on the survey instrument. Based on the feedback on the pilot survey, the main change that was made to the survey was that the overall number of questions was reduced and some of the questions were simplified and refocused.

It is interesting to note that the feedback on the pilot survey showed there was one section of the questionnaire that caused a degree of concern amongst certain respondents. This was the section where respondents were asked to rank a list of internal functions and external occupations. Some respondents indicated they felt this was requiring them to engage in stereotyping and making value judgements between the functions and occupations listed, and that this was not something they felt comfortable doing. After much consideration, it was felt that the entire questionnaire was aimed at tapping into 'subjective and individual opinion', and that the framework for the rankings was based generally on Goldthorpe and Hope's (1974) well-established, well-tested model used in their study of the status of occupational groupings. As such it was decided that the

ranking framework would be useful indicators of perceptions of the status of HRD/Training and was retained as part of the main survey. It was recognised that this part of the questionnaire might have a low completion rate because of the possibility of some respondents dislike of it.

8.3 Main Questionnaire Survey: design and dissemination

The next stage of the research comprised a postal questionnaire survey targeted at respondents in UK public sector organisations. The survey was disseminated during September 2004.

The main questionnaire was divided into four sections, as follows:

- Section 1. Details of the Respondent's Organisation and Role
- Section 2. The Role and Structure of the HRD/Training function
- Section 3. Status of the HRD/Training Function and Profession
- Section 4. Biographical Details

The questionnaire comprised 21 main items, including the following:

1. The respondent's job title.
2. The reporting line for the Head of the HRD/training function. Five options were given: Head of Personnel/HR, Head of Central Service/Corporate Services, CEO/Director General, Management Board, Don't Know and Other.
3. The extent to which Investors in People (IiP), e-learning technology, diversity and inclusivity, and working with external contractors had influenced the HRD/Training function now and five years ago. A five-point Likert-type scale

was used for responses (Table 3.6) and respondents were offered a sixth option of ‘Don’t Know’.

Table 3.6: Likert-type Scale used in Questionnaire

<p>Likert-type Scale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. not at all2. a little3. a moderate amount4. a significant amount5. a great amount

4. Respondents were asked about the extent to which the role of the HRD/Training function had become ‘more strategic’ over the past five years. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for responses together with a sixth option of ‘Don’t Know’.
5. Respondents were asked to respond to the question, ‘If the function has become more strategic, has this change strengthened the status of the HRD/training function in your organisation?’ A five-point Likert-type scale was given for responses as well as a ‘Don’t Know’ option.

6. Respondents were asked which of a list of 10 factors (Table 3.7) would help the HRD/Training function improve its status. Respondents were offered one other choice: ‘nothing can improve its status/image’, and given an opportunity to add ‘Other’ factors. Respondents could tick all the categories that they thought applied. The 10 categories were a composite of the main factors identified in the literature as being of relevance in the function improving its status (see Chapter Two: Literature Review; as exemplified by the work of Gold et al 2004; Garavan 1995; Garavan et al 1993; Buckley and Caple 1995; Hamlin 2002).

Table 3.7: Factors Influencing the Status of HRD/Training

Factors Influencing the Status of HRD/Training
1. Making its role more clear and explicit
2. Only employing professionally qualified staff
3. Having greater access to and more visible support from top management
4. Direct reporting line to CEO/Permanent Secretary
5. Stronger partnership with HR/Personnel function
6. Stronger partnership with managers
7. Demonstrating specialists and exclusive knowledge and expertise
8. Demonstrating a more ‘evidence-based’/research based approach to its work
9. Demonstrating more organisation development and change management expertise
10. Demonstrating links between its role and performance improvement
11. Nothing can improve its status
12. Other

The second section of the questionnaire comprised one main question followed by 10 sub-sections. Each sub-section had a statement followed by three options and two time frames, 'Now' and '5 Years Ago'. Respondents were asked to identify which of the options best described the HRD/training function in their organisations 'Now' and '5 years ago' (see Figure 3.3 as an example).

The 10 sub-sections corresponded to the 10 elements that the adapted strategic HRD conceptual framework introduced earlier in this chapter. The aim here was to see the extent to which the role and structure of the HRD/training function was seen as having become 'strategic' over the past 5 years.

<p>Question 8: Which of the following best describe your HRD/training function? Please mark one of three options in each of the two columns, 'Now' and '5 years ago'.</p>		
<p>a. The HRD function and line managers have:</p>		
	Now	5 years ago
A strong, consistent and active partnership.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A loosely structure and variable partnership.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A weak/no working partnership.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 3.2: Example of Questions Designed to Identify Change in Role

In terms of responses, three categories of options were provided and these were aligned to the adapted strategic fit conceptual model explained earlier in this chapter. Specifically, in each sub-category, each of the options corresponded to one of the three strategic fit types described earlier: tight fit, loose fit and fragile fit.

The third part of the questionnaire comprised two ranking exercises. Firstly, Question 9 asked respondents to rank from 1-10 (where 1= *the highest* and 10= *the lowest*) ten internal organisational functions across four dimensions, namely, 'Career Advancement Potential', 'Level of Qualifications', 'Power and Influence over People', and 'Value to the Organisation'. The ten internal functions listed are given in Figure 3.4. The four dimensions were similar to those used by Goldthorpe and Hope in their classic, well-established and influential occupational ranking study (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974).

The Hope-Goldthorpe (H-G) classification is an established system for measuring social or occupational status (Goldthorpe & Hope, 1974), based originally on men's occupations. The expressed intention of the H-G scale was to develop a scale for measuring the 'general desirability' of occupations "...on which the occupations of all economically active men could be projected with some small, uniform, and estimatable degree of error" (Goldthorpe & Hope, 1974 p.22). Despite its limitations (it was devised using only on men's occupations), the derivation of the Hope-Goldthorpe scale was subjected to a very large validation exercise and researchers have continued to draw on their work (Evans, 1999; Johnes, 2006).

These specific internal functions were chosen on the basis of feedback to a trial ranking exercise with focus groups and as part of the pilot questionnaire survey. Further, they

were chosen to offer a spread of well-established, discrete functions like Finance and Information Technology and others that are less discrete (Corporate Planning), and those that would be of relevance to both central and local government organisations. The intention was to compare the ranking of the HRD/Training function against the other nine functions.

Question 10 also comprised a ranking exercise but this time focused around external occupations rather than internal functions. Respondents were asked to rank ten occupations using the same scale as for Question 9. The ten occupations chosen are listed in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: List of Internal Functions & External Occupations

Internal Functions	External Occupations
Legal Services	University Lecturer
Finance	Office Cleaner
HR/Personnel	Doctor
HRD/Training	HR/Personnel Practitioner
Corporate Planning	Accountant
Communication Services	Porter
CEO's Office/Private Office	HRD/Training Practitioner
Policy Work	Nursing Practitioner
Information Technology	Physiotherapist
Procurement and Estate Management	School Teacher

Most of these occupations were chosen because they have been the focus of previous occupational status studies, as shown in Chapter Two: Literature Review, and provided a useful comparative base. In this study, the occupations ‘University Lecturer’ and ‘Teacher’ were specifically chosen as comparisons because both they and HRD/Training are involved in similar processes of work – education and development – albeit in different contexts and with different methodologies (although even certain methodologies are now becoming shared).

Section Four of the survey comprised only two questions, one asking for the respondents’ gender and the other asking about the types of qualifications held by the respondents. For the latter, respondents were offered eight, not mutually exclusive, categories, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Question 12: ‘What qualifications do you hold?’	
Certificate/diploma.... <input type="checkbox"/>	HR/HRD/Training qualification..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Degree..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Management qualification..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Masters..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Technical qualification..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Doctorate..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state)..... <input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 3.3: Question 12 - Types of Qualifications

8.4 The Sample

As a reminder, questionnaires were sent to 1,797 individuals working in central and local government organisations that were listed on the Centre for Management and Policy Studies (renamed the National School of Government) database during September 2004. The database included contact details of people who had had contact with the organisation in the past year and it was used to select a sample of the three types of respondents the survey was targeted at, that is HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers in public sector organization. The database included names and contact details of 19, 115 public sector HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers of which 14, 995 were managers (649 in local government and 14, 346 in the civil service), 1912 were HR specialists (208 local government and 1704 in the civil service), and 2208 were HRD/Training specialists (478 local government and 2160 in the civil service). The sample population was selected using random sampling.

The database was segmented into the three role categories. Of the local government managers available, 324 were randomly selected from the list of 649, and of the civil service managers, 326 were randomly selected from the list of 14, 346. Given the relatively small number of local government HR/Personnel listed, all 208 were selected. Of the civil service HR/Personnel listed, 340 were randomly selected from the list of 1,740. Of the local government HRD/Training specialists listed, 239 were randomly selected, and 360 civil service HRD/Training specialists were randomly selected. Accordingly, of the sample, 771 (43%) were in local government and 1026 (57%) in the civil service. Of the total sample, 650 (36%) were managers, 548 (31%) were

HR/Personnel specialists, and 599 (33%) were HRD/Training specialists. The aim was to get, as far as was possible, a balance between the numbers in each of the three roles.

8.5 *Distribution of Questionnaire*

The questionnaire was mailed to the respondents on the database in October 2004 together with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the survey. Respondents were given three weeks in which to respond. After this deadline, a final reminder was sent to encourage last-minute returns. A pre-addressed, stamped envelope was included with each questionnaire sent out.

8.6 *Data Logging and Data Analysis*

The data recording started at the end of December 2004. The data from each completed questionnaire was logged onto an SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) database. Before the data logging started, the SPSS template had been developed. The variables had been formatted and tested, and the format of the variables had been modified based on the trial that had been carried out. In terms of process, the data logging was a time consuming activity. Care had to be taken to avoid errors in recording. Once all the questionnaires had been logged, the data analysis was started, again using SPSS and Excel.

8.9 *Questionnaire Survey: some observations*

It is generally accepted that a questionnaire survey can provide both quantitative and qualitative data and thus is a flexible research tool. In practice and as expected, designing and disseminating the questionnaire was a challenge, as will be illustrated in this section. Beginning on a positive note, the questionnaire survey method has many advantages. For example, postal or electronic questionnaires are usually quicker and

cheaper to disseminate than other research methods. In addition, the survey sample can be spread across a wide geographical area. Further, it is well documented that a questionnaire can reduce some of the risks of interviewer error which may bring into question the reliability and validity of interview-based results. The questionnaire method allows the respondent to set the pace, allows them time to think about the questions and even check out certain responses, thus creating the possibility of delivering a more informed and possibly more accurate response – in terms of feedback on the HRD/Training questionnaire, some of respondents indicated that they valued the fact that the method allowed them to reflect and consider some of their responses.

Added to this, questionnaires offer respondents a certain degree of anonymity, especially if the questions are seen as being personally intrusive or embarrassing, and respondents may be more inclined to respond openly and accurately than when faced with an interviewer. In the case of this survey, during the feedback, some of the respondents indicated that they found the internal functions/external occupations ranking part of the questionnaire somewhat of a ‘moral’ struggle and easier to respond to as a paper-based, opposed to face-to-face, exercise. Another advantage is that the potential problem of non-contacts is reduced such as cancellation interview appointments, as happened with a few of the interviews and focus group sessions that were held. On the other hand, the questionnaire method can also be prone to a number of limitations and these have been well articulated in the literature on research methodology (Moser 1965; Bryman & Bell 2003; Robson 2002).

For example, a self-administered, postal questionnaire may not necessarily be an entirely speedy way of carrying out a survey. It can take time to disseminate the questionnaires, contact details may be flawed or out of date and time needs to be built in for late returns and any follow-up attempts. Further, postal self-administered questionnaires can be prone to a poor response rate.

In terms of more specific limitations, the questionnaire method only works if the questions are simple, clear and unambiguous and the questionnaire is reasonably short. This was one of the main points in the feedback on the pilot survey – some of the questions were originally overly complex and imprecise, and the overall size of the questionnaire was seen as being discouraging (some respondents reported that there were too many questions and that they had found this to be a disincentive). Further, and in hindsight, in terms of the sections of the survey that required respondents to rate or rank a set of items, they needed to be given very clear and precise instructions on what was required. As Moser (1965) suggests, self-administered questionnaires are unsuitable where the purpose of the surveys is complex and difficult to explain, where the respondent is being asked complex questions or where it is desirable to probe deeply. The responses to the self-administered questionnaire have to be accepted as final unless follow-up interviews can be built into the research process, resources permitting:

"There is no opportunity to probe beyond the given answer, to clarify an ambiguous one, to overcome unwillingness to answer a particular question or to appraise the validity of what a respondent said in the light of how [it was said]. In short, the mail questionnaire is essentially an inflexible method." (Moser 1965 p.177-178).

Questionnaires are not appropriate where spontaneous answers are sought or where it is important that the views of the only respondent are obtained without them being influenced by consultation with others. For example, some of the respondents in the pilot survey indicated that they had discussed the questions at a team meeting to get a 'shared view' on some of the issues the questionnaire was aiming to explore. Further, the respondent has access to all the questions at the start of the filling-in process and therefore the responses to the different questions cannot be seen as being independent. Clearly, this issue needs to be taken into account in the design of the questionnaire. In addition, there is no scope to supplement the responses with observational data such as attitude to the survey or reaction to specific questions.

In terms of the specific limitations of this survey, the inclusion of the rankings section was problematic, as discussed earlier and this issue will be re-visited in the chapter discussing the survey findings. There were concerns about the length of the survey and it was shortened following the feedback from the pilot. Also, the extent to which respondents can accurately recall the conditions around the HRD/Training function, and indeed their own perceptions of and feelings about it at the time, raises questions about the validity of including the questions asking respondents about the state of the function five years previously. Having considered the approach taken to the design and implementation of the survey the next two sections will briefly describe the use made of focus group sessions, debriefing meetings and interviews as another set of useful research tools.

9. Focus Group Meetings and Interviews

Prior to the survey, focus group meetings and interviews were conducted with HR/personnel practitioners, HRD practitioners/trainers, and managers within the civil service. These were selected on the basis of convenience – they were all people who had signed up to attend a HRD/Training practitioner, HR practitioner or management course at the National School of Government and were contacted via the Course Director inviting them to join a focus group session. Sufficient numbers from each of the three roles accepted and took part in the sessions.

Use was made of focus group meetings and interviews in three ways. Firstly, as a means of understanding some of the contextual issues; secondly, as a means of gathering background information that helped guide and inform the development of the questionnaire survey and thirdly, as a means of disseminating and contextualising the job advertisements analysis and survey findings. The value of this type of data was that it provided important insights into ‘the talk’ around HRD/Training (Sambrook, 1998, 2001; Lee 2001) which influences how the function is perceived, experienced and treated.

Focus groups are a tool frequently used in market research (Calder 1977; Langer 2006) and their use has increasingly been recognised as having relevance and value for broader social and organisational research (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Blackburn & Stokes, 2000). Both Langer (2006) and Bryman and Bell (2003) offer detailed explanations and analyses of the method and its applications as a research tool.

In terms of pre-survey focus groups, six focus group sessions were held in the weeks leading up to the design of the pilot survey (see Table 3.9) – two of the groups comprised HRD/Training practitioners, one involved human resources/personnel practitioners, and three involved managers (two groups of which were targeted at graduate fast-track managers). The total number of focus group sessions held may be perceived as relatively small (Bryman & Bell suggest that although the norm is between 12 to 15 the actual number can vary depending on their purpose – Bryman & Bell 2003). Given that the main purpose of these focus group meetings was as a means of gleaning contextual information, six were felt to be sufficient in terms of reaching a position of ‘analytic saturation’ (Calder 1977).

Further, each focus group session lasted between 75-90 minutes and participants’ responses to the pre-scripted questions were recorded using both a tape recorder and in the form of note-taking by the researcher while simultaneously acting as a session facilitator. The focus group discussions explored participants’ perceptions of the HRD/Training function and the changes affecting its role and status in their organisations.

Table 3.9: List of Focus Groups

Focus Group	Type of Participants	n.
1.	HRD/Training Practitioners	8
2.	HRD/Training Practitioners	7
3.	HR/Personnel Practitioners	7
4.	Manager (general)	8
5.	Managers (fast-track)	6
6.	Managers (fast-track)	7

In terms of post-survey debriefing meetings, three sessions were held with HRD/Training practitioners as a means of contextualising and authenticating the findings of the survey and the job advertisement analysis. These were useful in terms of ‘testing’ respondents’ reactions to the data, and helped in making sense of the findings and helped in the search for explanations. It might have been interesting to have held more focus group and further debriefing sessions but this was not possible in the time available. It took time to set up each of the focus groups and debriefing meetings (this often meant working through several levels of people to negotiate suitable times for the meetings).

On a couple of occasions, meetings were set up and these then had to be rescheduled. Further, once the session was in progress, participants generally had a lot to say so it was important to keep tight control of the discussion. Notes were taken and the sessions were tape-recorded (although the quality of some of the early recordings was poor due to a defective microphone).

10. Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were held with HRD/Training practitioners before and after the survey (Table 3.10). The seven pre-survey interviews were designed to explore the changing context of the public service and the role of HRD/Training within this context. The interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes each and served to provide useful background, contextual details.

Table 3.10: Pre-Survey Interviews

Interview Respondent	Type of Organisation	Mode
1.	Civil service	Face-to-face
2.	Civil service	Face-to-face
3.	Civil service	Face-to-face
4.	Civil service	Face-to-face
5.	Local government	Telephone
6.	Local government	Telephone
7.	Local government	Telephone

A small number - six - of post-survey telephone interviews were also carried out with those participating in the survey. The aim of these interviews was to seek clarification on some of the responses given as well as to get some feedback on the questionnaire itself. Of the interviewees, two were with HRD/Training practitioners, two with HR/Personnel specialists and two with managers. All six interviewees were in civil organisations, again chosen on the basis that they had indicated that they would be open to a post-survey

follow interview, and they were more readily available. Attempt was made to contact a couple of local government respondents but they did not respond to message that were left. Clearly, the value of the post-survey interviews and focus group sessions data is limited by the fact that all the interviewees/participants were from civil service organisations and the fact that it is not representative of local government organisations.

Reflecting on the uses and value of the interview method, it can be an extremely flexible research tool (Breakwell, 1995; Silverman, D. 1993; West 2002) and one, as found in the case of this research, that can work well with other research methods. The benefits and disadvantages of the interview approach have been convincingly considered by many authors (Brewerton and Millward, 2001; Silverman, 2000, 2001; Breakwell, 1995; Mason, 1996; Roberts, 1993; Denscombe, 1998; West, 2002). For example, several authors suggest that interviews provide a trade off between offering data richness and flexibility, and being a time-consuming activity with poor reliability (Brewerton and Millward, 2001; West, 2002).

Further, much has been written about the interviewer-respondent relationship and how this can influence the interview process (Oakley, 1993; Dunscombe, 1998; Padgett 1998; Jones, 1985). For example, West (2002) and Sapsford and Jupp (1996) usefully highlight the risk of 'social desirability responding'. This may happen when respondents adjust their answers to show themselves in a more favourable light. Other risks include the research interview spilling into a counselling session that could trigger all kinds of ethical dilemmas (Oka and Shaw, 2000); however, the risk of this was minimal in the case of the interviews undertaken as part of this study given that the subject matter was of a relatively impersonal nature.

More generally, researcher judgement can be swayed by many factors: interviewee personality, communication style, status, power and values and sometimes the pressure/temptation for self-disclosure. So, managing the interview transaction, however briefly, requires self-awareness, sensitivity and discipline. In this research it was found to be important, as an interviewer, to remain emotionally neutral and controlled and to consciously avoid appearing to affirm or contradict (however subtly or slightly) the perspective presented by the interviewee during the interview process.

Reducing the risk of bias within the interview method is a significant concern for those using this approach. Khatri and Budhwar (2002) discuss the potential problems of impartiality presented by the interview method. In terms of their own study of strategic human resources, they built-in a safety mechanism of using two researchers as interviewers and data analysts, both of whom were present at the interviews and both individually analysed the interview data – twice. This approach is useful and effective where such resources are available – however it was not possible to use multiple researchers in this study of the HRD/Training function.

11. Dissemination of Findings

Disseminating of the results of the research was an important part of this study. This was because firstly, the research process had built up an expectation amongst some of the stakeholders that the findings would be shared once the research had been completed. As such, dissemination of the results was important as a means of satisfying stakeholder expectations and retaining their ‘goodwill’ toward future research activity. Secondly, there had been an implicit assumption at the beginning of the research process that it

would try to be of some practical value to practitioners in terms of giving them further insights into the present state of the HRD/Training function and profession. Therefore, it was important to have found ways to disseminate the findings more widely within the practitioner community.

The formal dissemination of findings took the following form:

1. Publication of an article in the International Review of Administrative Sciences journal in March 2006.
2. Publication of an article in the Industrial and Commercial Training Journal in February 2007.
3. Presentations at two American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) Annual International conferences, one in May 2004 in Washington and the other in June 2006 Dallas, USA.
4. A paper at the IASIA (International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration) conference in Seoul, South Korea in 2004.
5. Several seminars organised by the National School of Government and the Cabinet Office between 2005-6 including those targeted at Heads of Learning and Development.

12. The Research Process: strengths & limitations

The starting point for this section is the proposition that ‘good’ research benefits from self-critique (Marshall, 1986). It is accepted that every methodology has its limitations and as a researcher it is important to be aware of these and to factor them into the analysis and interpretation of findings (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). Accepting the

epistemological differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches and recognising the arguments of those opposed to mixing methods (as presented in Bryman & Bell 2003), this research took a pluralist approach. Using multiple research methods and tools was intended to limit the risk of being over-reliant on any one methodological approach (either positivistic or social constructionist) which would bring with it its own inherent limitations (Hassard & Pym 1990; Wilk 2001; Lee 2001), and a means of achieving data triangulation (Denscombe 1998).

Although making use of multiple tools was an enormous benefit to the range and quality of data acquired and as a means of triangulating the data, in practice it was challenging and required the ability to switch from immersion in one mode of thinking and operating to another, quite different one. For example, the job advertisements analysis and the survey were highly structured, intensive investigative tools in terms of data recording and analysis; by comparison, the focus groups meetings, individual interviews and debriefing sessions were less structured and more demanding in terms of facilitation and interpersonal communication skills. Another point of observation is that, from the researcher perspective, the process of the job advertisement analysis and the survey design and implementation conveyed a greater sense of safety than the greater level of personal exposure encountered during the focus group meetings, interviews and debriefings.

On the other hand, the latter set of methods helped bring a measure of content related validity to the research which Booth (1992) and Clements (2000) argue is an important feature of good research. Content-related validity refers to the need for the researcher to be thoroughly grounded in the content matter of that which is being researched (Booth

1992). For example, Clements found references in many of his research transcripts to theoretical models that it was necessary to recognise and in some cases to pick up on (Clements, 2000). The use of focus groups and individual interviews helped to provide useful contextual insights into and an unearthing of some ‘buried treasure’: some of the less tangible, less quantifiable information held by those being researched (Franzosi, 2000). In addition, authenticating interpretations (Brewerton and Millward, 2001; Oka and Shaw 2000) is important. Building in a feedback loop – in this case, having a number of debriefing sessions and stakeholder presentations – helped in ‘testing’ the robustness of the data interpretation.

In terms of some general observations, each element of the research process invariably took longer than was expected and planned. For example, the survey process, in terms of testing, piloting and implementation, and the focus groups meetings all took longer to set up than expected, especially because the process was dependent on the co-operation of other people. It was necessary to maintain a balance between emphasising the urgency of moving the process forward without pushing collaborators too hard and risk offending or alienating them. In addition, effectively managing stakeholders – in terms of both participation and expectations - was essential to the overall success of the research project.

The empirical parts of the study required and put to the test a number of research and analytical skills – including basic qualities such as resourcefulness (for example, in tracking down all the necessary editions of *People Management*), the ability to be highly organised (for example, in terms of managing all the various types of data before it is analysed, whilst it is being analysed, and once it has been analysed), self-discipline (for

example, when dealing with the more repetitive and uninspiring aspects of the research like data entry), and personal integrity (for example, although it might take many hours of precious research time to clarify a gap or inconsistency in the data it is essential to do so as a means of maintaining the robustness and integrity of the research project).

Overall, designing and implementing a set of research tools and techniques appropriate to the research questions and operable within the prevailing constraints was both challenging and stimulating. Generally, pragmatism served as the main guiding principle – working on and working with what was doable and usable.

13. Summary and Concluding Thoughts

In summary, this study compares the ways in which the role of HRD/Training has been represented in HRD/Training job advertisements over two periods of time – 1996-7 and 2003-4. Further, it attempts to identify the factors that are likely to have influenced its organisational and occupational status, and proposes an adapted model of strategic HRD/Training. In doing so, this study employs a range of methodological tools – documentary analysis, a questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and interviews – and incorporates a number of methodological elements: descriptive, comparative, conceptual, normative and critical-evaluative.

It is acknowledged that aspects of the research approach taken in this study were weak and needed both greater rigour as well as a more thorough exploration of alternative research approaches. Well-constructed case examples from representative organisation would have been particularly useful in adding depth and finer detail of the analysis of the state of the HRD/Training function. Accepting these and the other limitations mentioned

towards the end of this chapter, overall, the methodology underpinning this study was well-constructed, compatible with the research aim and appropriate to the research questions. The particular strength of this research is its pluralist, multiple methods approach. The use of a mix of complementary research tools worked well and added a sense of ‘completeness’ to the study as a whole. Methodologically, it responds to the concerns of both those who argue that human resources research should be more quantitative (Darling et al 2001) and those who argue that it should be more qualitative (Khatri and Budhwar 2002).

Analysis of the data was systematic and thorough, and the findings and their subsequent analysis-interpretation do make a useful contribution to the body of knowledge on the role and status of the human resource development/training function and more specifically to promoting a deeper understanding of the concept and the practice of strategic human resource development.

Chapter 4

HRD/Training Job Advertisements Data Analysis

“We also suggest that the recruitment advertisement is a neglected source of information about the developments within a particular discipline. They can provide insights into some of the complex changes and debates surrounding a particular function.”

(Redman & Mathews 1995 pp.15)

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the HRD/Training job advertisements. What follows is primarily an analysis of the main differences in how the HRD/Training role is described in the job advertisement for the two periods, 1996-97 and 2003-04. The chapter includes a brief comparison of the data from public and private sector posts as a means of highlighting any significant sector differences in how the role of the HRD/Training function is represented in the advertisement in each sector.

Before discussing the findings, a brief reminder of the reason why job advertisements were chosen as a data source. Although brief and impressionistic, a job advertisement serves as a distillation of the essence of a given work role. It can reveal interesting aspects of the post, its purpose, its skill content and its status within the organisation, and essentially, 'what matters most' about its role (Matthews & Redman 1994; Hartog et al 2007). In this context, it was assumed that an examination of HRD/Training job advertisements would yield some useful information about how the role, structure and status of the HRD/Training function is defined at the point of recruitment, and how this might have changed over time.

The chapter will now move on to a detailed examination of the job advertisements data, starting with a brief reminder of the scope of the data gathering process.

2. Scope of Data

HRD/Training job advertisements in 22 editions of the Chartered Institute of People and Development Institute (CIPD) *People Management* magazine over two periods of time were analysed. Half of the editions were from the period September 1996 to March 1997 and half from the period September 2003 to March 2004 and matched the date of the editions for 1996-7 as closely as possible to allow for any seasonal variations in advertising practice (details in the Appendices).

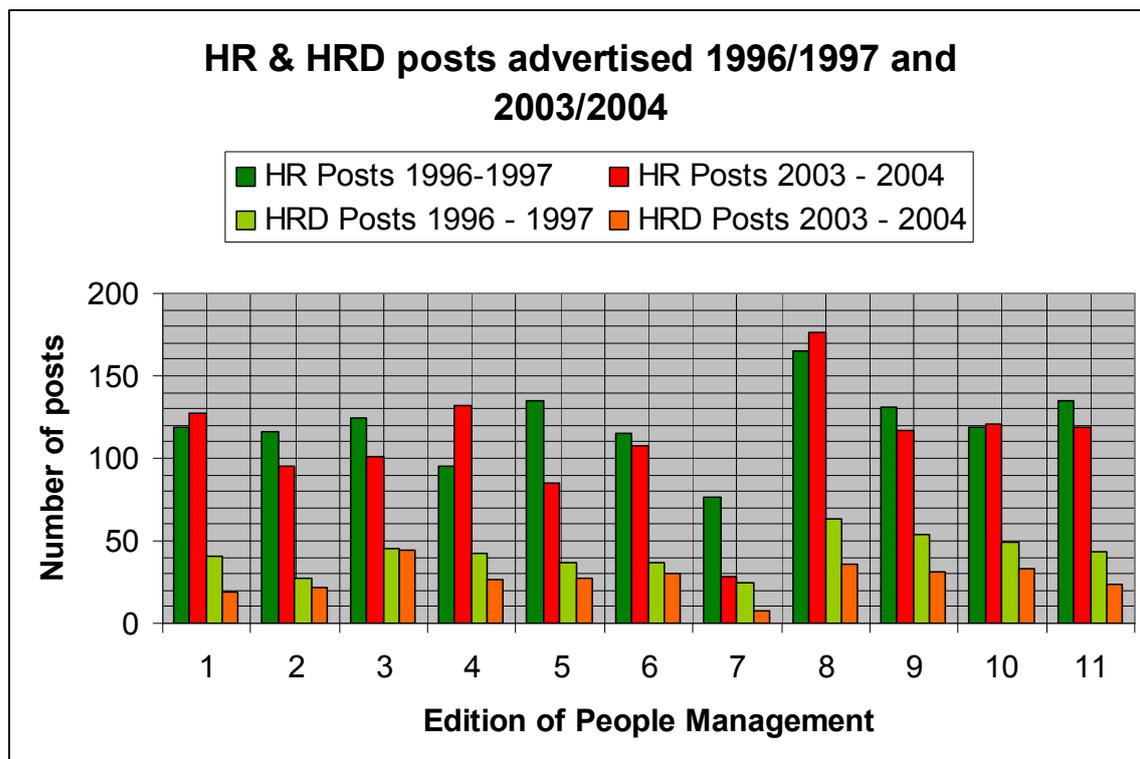
The job advertisement section of each edition of the *People Management* was carefully scrutinised and the appropriate data corresponding to each of the 18 dimensions specified in the previous chapter on the research methodology was recorded onto a bespoke Filemaker-Pro database. Designing the template, piloting it and recording the data was a lengthy and time-consuming process lasting several months. This process is described in more detail in Chapter 3: Research Methodology. The next section begins with a description of the number and types of posts identified in the job advertisements.

3. Number of HRD/Training Posts

The 22 editions of *People Management* carried a total of 3348 job advertisements. Most of the job advertisements – 3303 - were for HR and HRD posts. However, a small number of posts did not fall into this category and included such jobs aimed at IT (Information Technology) and finance specialists.

The Human Resources job advertisements were sub-divided into HR/Personnel posts and HRD/Training posts. Of the total 3303 HR posts, 2540 (76.9%) were identified as HR/Personnel and 763 (23.1%) were identified as HRD/Training posts (see Table 4.1 in the Appendices).

Figure 4.1: Number of HR & HRD jobs advertised in 1996-7 & 2003-4



Overall, just under a quarter (23.1%) of the total number of human resources jobs (3303) were HRD/Training posts.

4. Analysis of HRD/Training Posts by Sector

The 763 HRD/Training posts identified in the 22 editions of *People Management* magazine were content analysed and the data recorded onto a bespoke *FilemakerPro* template. Of the 463 HRD/Training jobs were identified in the 1996-97 editions of *People*

Management, 26.8% (124) were located in the public sector and 70.6% (327) in the private sector. Of the 300 HRD/Training posts were identified for 2003-04, 53.3% (160) were located in the public sector and 43.7% (131) in the private sector (Figure 4.2).

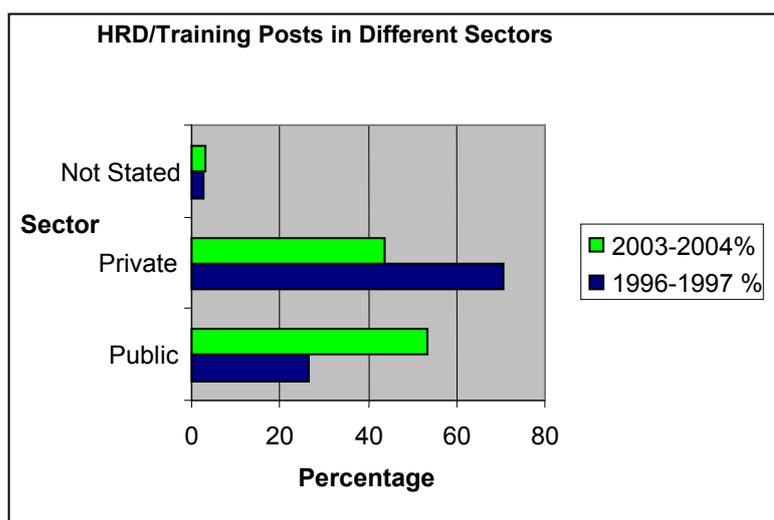


Figure 4.2: A Comparison of the Percentage of HRD/Training Jobs in Public & Private Sectors in 1996-7 & 2003-4

The data showed that fewer HRD/Training jobs were advertised in 2003-4 than in 1996-7.

Some explanations for this might be that:

1. employers used other media such as web-based recruitment (including advertising vacancies on their own websites) to for HRD/Training jobs, and/or,
2. there was a lower turnover of HRD/Training staff in 2003-4 than in 1996-7, therefore fewer posts being advertised externally, and/or
3. there was a change in recruitment policy such as employers putting greater emphasis on internal trawls and limiting the level of external recruitment (as is the case in many public sector organisations in the current economic climate).

Without a detailed investigation into the specific factors influencing the recruitment of HRD/Training jobs in 1996-7 and 2003-4, it is not possible to offer a reliable explanation for this change. Also, the analysis is limited by the fact that only one source of job advertisements was examined. In hindsight, it would have been helpful to have examined alternative recruitment outlets including on-line ones. What follows next is a discussion of the findings of the job advertisements analysis as they relate to the role and changes to the role of HRD/Training in the two time periods mentioned.

5. Indicators of HRD/Training Role

5.1 Job Titles as indicator of HRD/Training Role

It is interesting to note that the analysis of the job titles used in the 763 HRD/Training job advertisements showed that overall, 'Training' and 'Training and Development' were the most popular titles. The term 'HRD' appeared in the job title of only 2.2% of the job advertisements overall. Its position remained about the same in the two periods studied – 1.9% in 1996-7 and 2.7% in 2003-4. Further, the top three most popular titles were the same in 1996-7 and 2003-4 for both sectors (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). This suggests that, at least in terms of how the job advertisements were written, training and training and development were the titles that were most associated with the role of HRD/Training in both time periods.

It is also worth noting that the data showed that 143 different terms were used in the job titles of the 763 HRD/Training job advertisements analysed for 1996-97 and 2003-04. For 1996-7, 85 different job titles were identified and 84 were identified for 2003-4, with 26 job titles featuring in both 1996-7 and 2003-4. This is interesting in that both the literature (McGoldrick et al 2001) and comments from the focus groups suggest that HRD/Training

has an identity problem – the great number of job titles is likely to add to view that there is a lack of clarity about what it is and what it does.

Table 4.1: Comparison of Top Three Public & Private Sector Job Titles 1996-7

Public Sector Titles 1996-7			Private Sector Titles 1996-7		
Title	n.	%	Title	n.	%
Training	32	25.8	Training	103	31.5
Training and Development	20	16.1	Training and Development	63	19.3
Personnel and Training	19	15.3	Personnel and Training	26	8.0
Other	53	42.8	Other	135	41.2
Total	124	100	Total	327	100

Table 4.2: Comparison of Public & Private Sector Job Titles 2003-4

Public Sector 2003-4			Private Sector 2003-4		
Title	n.	%	Title	n.	%
Training and Development	26	16.3	Training	25	19.1
Training	22	13.8	Training and Development	21	16.0
Learning and Development	15	9.4	Learning and Development	17	13.0
Other	97	35.4	Other	68	51.9
Total	160	100.	Total	131	100.0

5.2 Types of Tasks as indicator of HRD/Training Role

Overall, the task ‘Training’ featured in a greater number of the job advertisements (66.6%) than ‘HRD’ (development approaches other than training), mentioned in 18.5% of the advertisements. ‘Training’ was the most frequently specified task in both 1996-7 (cited in 72.1% of the advertisements) and in 2003-4 (cited in 57.3% of advertisements) and ‘HRD’ increased in frequency from 8.6% in 1996-7 to 33.3% in 2003-4. These findings suggest that training was presented as a main feature of the HRD/Training role in the job advertisements. Further, the HRD/Training tasks data for the public and private sectors

(see Table 4.3) was tested using a chi-squared contingency table test with 13 degrees of freedom, at the 5% significance level. The results ($p = 0.13$) – suggested no significant difference between public sector tasks and private sector tasks.

Table 4.3: Comparison of HRD/Training Tasks in Public & Private Sector Overall

Public Sector			Private Sector		
Task	n.	%	Task	n.	%
Training	175	61.6	Training	317	69.2
Management of T&D	108	38	Management of T&D	148	32.3
HRD	52	18.3	Management/ Leadership Development	90	19.7
Management of people	45	15.8	HRD	85	18.6
Personnel	43	15.1	Personnel	80	17.5
Consultancy	36	12.7	Consultancy	76	16.6
Management/ Leadership development	34	12.0	Management of people	46	10.0
Policy/Strategy	31	10.9	Policy/Strategy	45	9.8
Change Management	27	9.5	Change Management	41	9.0
Learning	25	8.8	Skills development	27	5.9
Organisation Development	24	8.5	Organisation Development	20	4.4
Administration	17	6.0	Learning	16	3.5
Skills development	16	5.6	Administration	14	3.1
Research	11	3.9	Research	13	2.8

Given that this study was also interested in looking at the ways in which the HRD/Training role might have changed over time, the results were examined to determine if the tasks, qualities and expertise and experience specified in the advertisements had changed in the two periods. Accordingly, the data for HRD/Training tasks in 1996-7 and in 2003-4 (Table 4.4) was subjected to chi-squared contingency table tests. The *null hypotheses* ‘*There is no difference between the two time periods for HRD/Training tasks in the public sector/private sector*’, tested at the 5% significance level, were rejected. For the public sector, the result ($p = 2.82E-09$ (2.82×10^{-9}), $2.82E-09 < 0.05$) indicated there is a significant difference between HRD/Training tasks featured in the two time periods.

Similarly, the results for the private sector ($p= 1.3E-17$ (1.3×10^{-17}), $1.3E-17 < 0.05$) suggested there was a significant difference between the tasks specified in the two time periods.

Table 4.4: Change in HRD/Training Tasks - Public & Private Sectors

Sector/ Period/ Tasks	Public Sector					Private Sector				
	1996-7		2003-4		±	1996-7		2003-4		±
	n.	%	n.	%	%	n.	%	n.	%	%
Training	85	68.5	90	56.3	-17.8	334	72.1	78	59.5	-17.5
Policy/Strategy	19	15.3	12	7.5	-51	58	12.5	7	5.3	-57.6
People Management	19	15.3	26	16.3	6.5	51	11.0	16	12.2	10.9
Change Management	8	6.5	19	11.9	83.1	40	8.6	9	6.9	-19.8
HRD	7	5.6	45	28.1	401.8	40	8.6	52	39.7	361.6
Personnel	26	21.0	17	10.6	-49.5	91	19.7	16	12.2	-38.1
Consultancy	15	12.1	21	13.1	8.3	77	16.6	15	11.5	-30.7
Organisation Development	2	1.6	22	13.8	762.5	16	3.5	6	4.6	31.4
Research	8	6.5	3	1.9	-70.8	15	3.2	6	4.6	43.7
Administration	11	8.9	6	3.8	-57.3	24	5.2	2	1.5	-71.2
T&D Management	60	48.4	48	30.0	-38	170	36.7	41	31.3	-14.7
Management/ Leadership development	22	17.7	12	7.5	-57.6	106	22.9	8	6.1	-73.4
Learning	7	5.6	18	11.3	101.8	14	3.0	9	6.9	130
Skills development	11	8.9	5	3.1	-65.2	37	8.0	2	1.5	-87.5

* ± refers to the percentage difference frequency of tasks cited in job advertisements in 1996-7 and 2003-4

Here, it is worth considering what accounts for this change. Examination of the data indicated that 'HRD' tasks increased in frequency from 8.6% in 1996-7 to 33.7% 2003-4 and 'Organisation Development' increased from 3.5% in 1996-7 to 10% in 2003-4. This, combined with the decline in frequency of 'Training' as a from 72.1% in 1996-7 to 57.3% in 2003-4, suggests that there was more emphasis on development approaches other than training in 2003-4 than in 1996-7. This is in keeping with what is reported in the literature concerning the broadening of the learning approaches and pathways available to employees (Garavan, 2002; Eraut, 2000).

5.3 Qualities Sought as indicators of HRD/Training Role

An analysis of the data in Table 4.5 using a chi-squared test showed ($p=0.17$, $0.17 > 0.05$) that there was not a significant difference between the two sectors for qualities required. As Table 4.5 illustrates, the top ten qualities cited in the job advertisements in both the public and the private sectors were the same, albeit there were some differences in the rank order of some of the qualities.

Table 4.5: Comparison of Top 10 Qualities in Public & Private Sector Overall

Top 10 Qualities						
Rank	Public Sector			Private Sector		
	Type	n.	%	Type	n.	%
1	Communication skills	94	33.1	communication skills	123	26.9
2	interpersonal skills	40	14.1	influencing	104	22.7
3	creative/creative thinking	39	13.7	creative/creative thinking	84	18.3
4	Influencing	34	12	energy & drive	81	17.7
5	presentation skills	29	10.2	interpersonal skills	51	11.1
6	Flexibility	28	9.9	presentation skills	50	10.9
7	energy & drive	25	8.8	flexibility	45	9.8
8	relationship building skills	25	8.8	relationship building skills	39	8.5
9	facilitation skills	18	6.3	facilitation skills	39	8.5
10	Proactive	16	5.6	proactive	31	6.8

Table 4.6: Top Five Public & Private Sector Qualities Compared

Public Sector				Private Sector			
1996-7		2003-4		1996-7		2003-4	
Qualities	%	Qualities	%	Qualities	%	Qualities	%
communication skills	37.1	communication skills	30.0	communication skills	31.3	creative/creative thinking	22.9
interpersonal skills	21.0	creative/creative thinking	15.0	Influencing	21.0	influencing	22.1
influencing	15.3	relationship building skills	13.8	interpersonal skills	15.8	communication skills	19.1
flexibility	15.3	influencing	9.4	creative/creative thinking	15.1	energy & drive	18.3
creative/creative thinking	12.1	building networks	9.4	energy & drive	14.5	relationship building skills	16.0

The data in Table 4.7 was subjected to chi-squared tests and the results ($p= 0.46, 0.46 > 0.05$) show that there was not a significant difference in the qualities specified within the job advertisements in 1993-4 and in 2003-4.

Table 4.7: Comparison of Qualities 1996-7 & 2003-4

Qualities					
1996-7			2003-4		
Type	n.	%	Type	n.	%
communication skills	145	31.3	communication skills	75	25
Influencing	97	21.0	creative/innovative	56	18.7
Interpersonal skills	73	15.8	influencing	44	14.7
creative/innovative	70	15.1	relationship building skills	43	14.3
energy & drive	67	14.5	energy & drive	39	13.0
Flexibility	56	12.1	building networks	27	9.0
presentation skills	53	11.4	presentation skills	27	9.0
facilitation skills	38	8.2	leadership	21	7.0
Proactive	30	6.5	interpersonal skills	20	6.7
consultancy skills	26	5.6	facilitation skills	20	6.7
hands-on approach	24	5.2	flexibility	18	6.0
relationship building skills	22	4.8	proactive	17	5.7
analytical ability	19	4.1	strategic thinking	16	5.3
Motivational	13	2.8	motivational	16	5.3
Vision	12	2.6	hands-on approach	14	4.7
strategic thinking	9	1.9	consultancy skills	11	3.7
problem solving	6	1.3	vision	8	2.7
building networks	5	1.1	analytical ability	1	0.3
Leadership	3	0.6	understanding human behaviour	1	0.3
understanding human behaviour	1	0.2	problem solving	0	0.0

5.4 Experience/Expertise as indicator of HRD/Training Role

The result of chi-squared tests on the data in Table 4.8 suggested that there was a significant association between the two time periods for the expertise/experience specified in both the public sector ($p = 2.26E-05$ (2.26×10^{-5}), $2.26E-05 < 0.05$) and private sector ($p = 1.9E-14$, $1.9E-14 < 0.05$) advertisements. This suggests that there was significant change in the experience/expertise specified in the two periods.

Table 4.8: Change in Public & Private Sector Expertise/Experience

Sector/ Expertise	Public Sector					Private Sector				
	1996-7		2003-4		±	1996-7		2003-4		±
	n.	%	n.	%	%	n.	%	n.	%	%
Training design	32	25.8	49	30.6	18.6	111	24	46	35.1	46.3
Training delivery	32	25.8	49	30.6	18.6	120	25.9	46	35.1	35.5
T&D evaluation	10	8.1	20	12.5	54.3	39	8.4	22	16.8	100.0
HRD	4	3.2	34	21.3	565.6	33	7.1	37	28.2	297.2
Management	24	19.4	35	21.9	12.8	59	12.7	21	16.0	26.0
Working with senior managers	12	9.7	20	12.5	28.9	52	11.2	24	18.3	63.4
Strategy development	5	4.0	5	3.1	-22.5	14	3.0	5	3.8	26.7
Psychometrics	0	0.0	2	1.3	1.3	12	2.6	3	2.3	-11.5
Coaching	0	0.0	5	3.1	3.1	12	2.6	23	17.6	576.9
Change management	9	7.3	24	15.0	105.5	41	8.9	14	10.7	20.2
Competency frameworks	5	4.0	14	8.8	120.0	45	9.7	7	5.3	-45.4
Organisation & planning skills	16	12.9	29	18.1	40.3	49	10.6	18	13.7	29.2
Project management	6	4.8	13	8.1	68.8	26	5.6	21	16.0	185.7
Sector knowledge	35	28.2	48	30.0	6.4	198	42.8	54	41.2	-1.4
Legislation	10	8.1	7	4.4	-45.7	19	4.1	3	2.3	-43.9
Working with managers	22	17.7	16	10.0	-43.5	75	16.2	32	24.4	50.6
Training & development	84	67.7	70	43.8	-35.3	306	66.1	48	36.6	-44.6
T & D strategy	9	7.3	19	11.9	63.0	26	5.6	10	7.6	35.7
T&D policy	1	0.8	6	3.8	37.5	6	1.3	2	1.5	15.4
Organisation Development	2	1.6	17	10.6	562.5	15	3.2	4	3.1	-3.1

Also, although not logged as a separate sub-category because of their overall low frequency, expertise and experience in other areas such as budgetary management and information technology were also often cited in the job advertisements, with the latter being particularly prominent in the 2003-4 HRD/Training job advertisements. This is not surprising given the increasing emphasis given to HRD/Training practitioners about cost

effective/value-for-money delivery (see the Focus Groups data in Chapter 5) and the emergence of more technology based learning applications including e-learning and blended learning.

6. Indicators of HRD/Training Role as Strategic

The data was examined to determine if there was any change in the tasks with a strategic dimension, between the two time periods. It had been assumed that if the HRD/Training role had become more strategic over time then certain tasks would feature more prominently in the job advertisements in 2003-4 than in 1996-7. For the purposes of this exercise, certain tasks were defined as having a strategic dimension and these were Organisation Development, Change Management, Strategy/Policy, and Management/Leadership Development. These were subjected to chi-squared analyses. Based on this, the null hypothesis '*There is no difference between the two time periods for HRD/training tasks identified as having a strategic dimension*' was rejected. The results (p-value= 2.5E-10, $2.5E-10 < 0.05$) indicated there was a significant difference between the tasks with a strategic dimension specified in 1996-7 and those specified in 2003-4.

However, closer scrutiny of the data suggests that this in itself is not conclusive evidence that the HRD/Training in was more strategic or that it was defined in more strategic terms in 2003-4 than in 1996-7. What can be said is that the frequency of some of the tasks identified as having a strategic dimension changed between the two periods. For example, there was an increase in the frequency of Organisation Development and Change Management. However, the frequency of 'Management/Leadership Development' – another indicator of the function operating on a strategic level -instead of increasing as expected, declined from 22.9% in 1996-7 to 6.7%. 2003-4. Further, Policy/Strategy had been

identified as being another indicator of the function operating strategically. However, its frequency did not increase in the two time periods as expected.

One explanation for why there was not a notable increase in the Policy/Strategy element is that Policy/Strategy only constitutes a small percentage of the work of the HRD/Training function and is only likely to feature in senior positions. Unfortunately, based on the type of data gathered from the advertisements it was not possible to determine the seniority of a post and therefore cannot be used to confirm or refute this supposition.

The data was examined to determine if there was any change in the (see Table 4.19 in the Appendices) types of expertise/experience considered to be have a strategic dimension, namely, Working with senior managers, Working with managers, Strategy development, T&D strategy, T&D policy, Organisation development and Change management. These were subjected to a chi-squared test to determine if there was a difference in these specific areas of expertise/experience in the two time periods. The result ($p=0.17$, $0.17>0.05$), suggests there was not a significant difference in the specific expertise/experience featured in the two time periods.

Also, it is also worth noting that some of the specific types of expertise/experience seen as having a strategic dimension started from a fairly low base and the increases in their frequency from 1996-7 to 2003-4 were relatively modest – for example, 'Working with Senior Managers' increased from 11.2% to 15.3% and 'Change Management' from 8.9% to 13.7%.

Specific qualities identified as having a strategic aspect (namely, strategic thinking, vision, building networks and leadership) were subjected to chi-squared tests. Although there was a small increase in the percentage frequency of these qualities, the results of the chi-squared tests ($p= 0.27$, $0.27 > 0.05$) suggest that there is not a significant difference

between the two time periods for these specific, more strategically focused qualities. This suggests that the demand for qualities that could be seen as having a more strategic dimension did not increase significantly between the two time periods.

7. Contextual Factors as indicators of HRD/Training role

A number of initiatives featured strongly in the literature on HRD/Training, especially in the public sector. The four that seemed to feature most frequently as having had an impact on the role of the HRD/Training function - Investors in People, Diversity and Inclusivity, E-Learning and Working with External Contractors – were selected for analysis in this study. All the HRD/Training job advertisements were examined for any reference to each of these initiatives and the frequency was recorded.

Overall, the data analysis suggested that despite the value attributed to these initiatives in the literature and policy documents, none of them featured in any great significance in the job advertisements. Further, a comparison of the data for 1996-7 and 2003-4 showed that apart from 'E-learning' there has not been any substantial change in the position of the four initiatives examined (Table 4.9).

The relatively low frequency of initiatives such as 'Diversity' and 'Investors in People' in the Public Sector is particularly surprising given that both have such a high policy prominence within government organisations. For example, all government organisations are expected to be 'Investors in People' accredited or at least working toward achieving the standard which encourages the linking HRD/Training to business strategy.

Table 4.9: Comparison of Frequency of liP, Diversity, E-Learning and Working with Contractors 1996-7 & 2003-4

Sector/ Initiative	Public Sector		Private Sector	
	1996-7 (n.124) %	2003-4 (n.160) %	1996-7 (n.327) %	2003-4 (n.131) %
Diversity	11.3	8.1	3.4	2.3
liP	23.4	16.3	11.6	3.8
Contractors	9.7	12.5	8.9	6.9
E-Learning	0.8	6.9	0.3	6.2

8. Indicators of HRD/Training Status

8.1 Qualifications as indicator of status

The level of qualifications demanded of a role can be taken as an indicator of its professional status (McLaughlin & Webster, 1998). In the case of the HRD/Training job advertisements more than half (60.4%) of them specified a qualification requirement. Overall, of those that stipulated a qualification, nearly half (47.2%) specified an HR/HRD professional qualification and just over a quarter (26.5%) asked for an academic qualification (table 4.10). However, it is important to note that not all the advertisements included professional qualifications as an essential requirement. Some stated it was preferred, desirable or that the candidate could be working toward one. The figure of 47.2% includes all of these variations. To this extent, the value of this data is limited in that it does not show exactly how many of those recruited to the posts analysed actually held a professional qualification.

Table 4.10: Numbers & Types of Qualifications Overall

Qualifications		
Type	n.	%
HR/HRD/CIPD	360	47.2
Academic	202	26.5
Sector specific	24	3.1
Management	11	1.4

The data in Table 4.11 was examined to determine if there was any significant difference in the qualifications stipulated in the job advertisements for the two time periods. The result of a chi-squared test ($p= 0.00032$, $0.00032 < 0.05$) suggest that there was a significant difference between the two time periods for qualifications demanded. The main change appears to be that the demand for professional qualifications HR/HRD increased from 44.1% in 1996-7 to 52% in 2003-4 while the demand for academic qualifications decreased from 30.2% in 1996-7 to 20.7% in 2003-4.

Table 4.11: Public & Private Sector Qualifications Compared 1996-7 & 2003-4

Sector/ Period/ Qualification	Public Sector					Private Sector				
	1996-7		2003-4		±	1996-7		2003-4		±
	n.	%	n.	%	%	n.	%	n.	%	%
HR/HRD/CIPD	70	56.5	97	60.6	7.3	204	44.1	57	43.5	-1.4
Academic	21	16.9	28	17.5	3.6	140	30.2	31	23.7	-21.5
Sector specific	3	2.4	5	3.1	29.2	13	2.8	6	4.6	64.3
Management	4	3.2	2	1.3	-59.4	8	1.7	0	0.0	-100

8.2 Reporting Line as indicator of status

The data indicated that there were a variety of reporting lines. The list given in Table 4.12 identifies the main reporting lines identified and does not include minor variations to the designations listed. The problem with this category was that most of the advertisements did not actually specify the reporting line, and thus, 'Not Stated' had the largest frequency with 80.7% of the posts not specifying the reporting line. This might limit the value of this data.

Of the advertisements that did include a reporting line, most specified 'Head of HR/Personnel' (44.9%), followed by 'Training and Development Manager' (21.8%). Only 0.4% reported to the CEO and 0.3% to the Board. The total percentage frequency of Heads of HRD/Training reporting to high level position – even when the number reporting to a CEO, the Board, the Group CEO, Managing Partner, and Directors are added together - still only amounted to 11.5%.

Table 4.12: Reporting Line Data for All HRD/Training Post

Reporting Line		
Designation	n.	%
Not stated	616	80.7
Head of HR/Personnel	66	8.7
Training and Development Manager	32	4.2
Managing Director	8	1.0
Head of HRD	6	0.8
CEO	3	0.4
L&D Relationship Manager	3	0.4
Group Financial Director	3	0.4
Board	2	0.3
Group CEO	2	0.3
Business Director Corporate Services	2	0.3
Regional Director	2	0.3
Learning & Development Director	2	0.3
Director Change Management	1	0.1
Director of Service Delivery	1	0.1
Head of Workforce Development	1	0.1
Development Manager	1	0.1
Director Education and Leisure Services	1	0.1
Managing Partner	1	0.1
Quality and Training Manager	1	0.1
Industrial Relations Manager	1	0.1
Director of Education and Training	1	0.1
Establishment Officer	1	0.1
MD Poultry Division	1	0.1
Director of Operations	1	0.1
Director of HR and Quality	1	0.1
Divisional Director	1	0.1
Centre Manager	1	0.1
Management Development Director	1	0.1
Total	763	99.7

9. Summary & Concluding Comments

In summary, the data analyses showed that there were no significant differences between the HRD/training tasks in the public and private sectors however there were significant changes in the tasks between the two time periods. There were also no significant differences in expertise/experience required for the two sectors but there were strong changes in the expertise/experience required between the two time periods. It is important to note that due to the data groups collected there is **no** evidence to suggest that the changes have happened **over** the time period (1996/7 – 2003/4), the analysis simply concludes that there is a difference **between** the two time periods.

Further, data analyses of the tasks and qualities defined as having a strategic element suggest that while there appeared to be a significant difference in the strategically oriented tasks, closer scrutiny of the data suggested that this in itself was not conclusive evidence that HRD/Training role had become strategic. In short, the data analysis suggested that although there clearly has been some change in terms of how the HRD/Training role is represented, at least in the set of HRD/Training advertisements examined, it is not possible to say if the role has become strategic.

Also, the status of qualifications was interesting. For example, it was surprising to note the lack of emphasis on academic qualifications within HRD/Training posts (academic qualifications usually serve as a baseline qualification in many professions) and the fact that there has been comparatively modest increase in the demand for professional qualifications from 1996-7 to 2003-4.

Finally, accepting the limitations of job advertisements as brief and impressionistic, the data analysis has provided some useful insights into the role and status of the HRD/Training function within UK organisations. However, it would have been useful to have drawn on more than a single source of data – *People Management* magazine – and complemented the advertisements data with an analysis of more detailed HRD/Training job descriptions.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis: Pre-Survey Focus Groups & Interviews

"In the focus group...group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information...the benefits...synergism, snowballing, stimulation, security and spontaneity." (Catterall & Maclaran 1997 p.1)

1. Introduction

In addition to the job advertisements analysis, and prior to the survey, a number of focus group meetings and individual interviews with managers and human resources specialist were held. These were designed to explore the changing context of the public service and the role of HRD/training within this context. To reiterate, these were not intended to serve as the primary source of data but rather to provide contextual information. This chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the pre-survey focus group meetings and interviews.

As a reminder, a total of six focus groups sessions were conducted. Of these, one session was with HR/Personnel practitioners, two of the sessions were with HRD/training specialists, and the remaining three sessions were with line managers (of which two were with graduate fast track civil service managers and one was with general managers). All the participants worked in civil service departments. In addition to the focus groups, and

as a further means of understanding some of the contextual issues and challenges facing practitioners, seven HRD/Training practitioners were interviewed, four from civil service organisations and three from local government organisations.

2. Composition of Focus Groups

Line Managers

Three focus groups held were with line managers. Of these, one comprised eight general line managers and included participants from the following government departments: Child Support Agency, Department of Health, Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for Education and Skills, Customs and Excise, Government Office for London and the Food Standards Agency.

Two of the focus groups, comprising a total of 13 fast-track managers, included participants from the following departments: Department for Transport, Department for Constitutional Affairs, Cabinet Office, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Department for Education and Skills, Home Office, Ministry of Defence, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Scottish Executive, Department of Works and Pensions and the Department of Health.

Human Resources Specialists

Three of the focus groups held were with human resources specialists. Of these, one comprised seven HR/Personnel practitioners from the following departments: Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Department for Transport, Inland Revenue, Department for

Culture, Media and Sport, Home Office, Department of Trade and Industry, and the Home Office.

HRD/Training Practitioners

The other two focus groups comprised a total of 15 HRD/Training practitioners from the following departments: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Inland Revenue, Ministry of Defence, Department for Transport, Home Office, Department for Works and Pensions, Department for Education and Skills, Department for International Development, Department of Health and Customs and Excise.

All the focus group participants were people who had registered to attend a National School of Government course and they were invited via their respective Course Director to join the focus group sessions. The names of individual focus group participants are not given here because when individuals were invited to participate in the meetings they were assured their comments would not be attributable to individual participants. Although a contact list was kept of all individual participants, individual anonymity was assured in the interests of securing participation and open discussion.

Each focus group session lasted between 75-90 minutes and a series of pre-prepared questions were used to guide the discussions. On a couple of occasions, meetings that had been agreed had to be rescheduled. In terms of process management, generally, participants were quite talkative, so it was important to keep tight control of the discussion. Notes were taken and the sessions were tape recorded and later the main points of note were transcribed. The data was clustered into different themes as a means of identifying common issues arising from the discussions.

3. Interviews

In addition to the focus groups, and as a further means of understanding some of the contextual issues and challenges facing practitioners, six HRD/Training practitioners were interviewed. As a reminder, four of the interviewees worked in civil service organisations and three worked in local government. All had been HRD/Training practitioners for at least five years and some had been in the business for more than 15 years. Each was recommended by the National School of Government's Programme Director for courses for learning professionals as someone with considerable experience of HRD/Training and was known to be receptive to discussions about the state of HRD/Training. Interviews with the four working in civil service organisations were face-to-face and held at the London offices of the interviewees. The three local government interviewees were initially contacted by e-mail and a time for the telephone interview was agreed. Notes were taken by long-hand and later clustered into the themes of interest to this study.

Each semi-structured interview lasted between 25-40 minutes. The questions that guided the interviews were as follows:

- Introductory questions e.g. length of service, specific role...
- What do you see as the most important aspects of your work?
- Has your role changed in any way over the past few years? If so, in what ways?

- Would you say the HRD/Training function in your organisation is strategic? If so, in what ways?
- What are your thoughts about the status of HRD/Training in your organisation?

It would be too time-consuming to report the individual replies to each of these questions. Instead, what follows is a summary of the main, relevant themes that emerged through the interviews.

4. Focus Group & Interviews Findings

4.1 Overview

For purposes of reporting the findings of the focus groups and the interviews simply and clearly, these can be clustered into the following three main themes: understanding of the terms HRD and strategic HRD, perceptions of the HRD/Training role, and perceptions of it's the state of the HRD/Training and its organisational value and status. Overall, there was a strong message that there was a notable confusion about the terms 'HRD', human resource development and strategic HRD. Another strong message was that the perceived value of the HRD/Training and Development function within central government departments was unclear, uncertain and under-rated. What was particularly surprising was that it was not just the managers who reported this perception. Some of those in a human resources specialist role reported the same. The following section reports on these issues in more detail.

4.2 Labelling HRD/Training & Strategic HRD

A number of the focus group participants and some of the interviews commented on the different terms used for the HRD/Training function, and produced a variety of responses, with several people emphasizing the importance of understanding how customers experience this range of labels:

“I’m not sure how important what we call ourselves is... in the past there was a tradition of talking about training officers; you’re more likely to hear about learning and development officers, because the focus is on promoting learning (the experience) rather than on training (in the input)...” (Local government interviewee)

“HRD is useful. It helps convey the sense that we do more than training; it reflects the broader range of what we now do...but I can see how it might be unclear to some people what it means...” (Civil service interviewee)

“Whatever we call ourselves I think it should be clear to our customers what we can offer them...sometimes you don’t always have a choice in terms of what you call yourself...”
(Local government interviewee)

One aim of this study was to find out the extent to which HRD/Training was seen as being strategic. Given this, it was interesting to note that many focus group participants, including some that worked in a human resources role, indicated that the term ‘strategic HRD’ was not one with which they were too familiar. Several managers taking part in the focus group discussion either were not familiar with the concept of ‘strategic HRD/Training’ or only vaguely recognised it, as illustrated by the following comments:

“Another term that doesn’t mean much...” (Line manager, Focus Group)

Many, but not all, of the human resources practitioners had heard of the term but some of these, when asked, said they were not confident about explaining what it meant. A few of the human resources specialists said that strategic HRD was not something that was part of their day-to-day work:

“Strategic HRD – not sure what it means...It is something very removed from the workforce...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

This is understandable given that some of those involved in front-end training delivery roles (and especially those that were relatively new to HRD/Training practice) might not have had exposure to the more strategic elements of the work (as defined in the Literature Review chapter). However, a more fundamental problem could be that not only do many, especially those in a managerial role, simply not understand even the concept of strategic HRD, some had difficulty even understanding the basic term ‘HRD’. That is, many of those taking part in the focus group discussions and interviews expressed some confusion over, lack of awareness of and unease with the term human resource development/ ‘HRD’. Several participants, including some graduate fast-track managers who, as part of their induction into the civil service, would have had access to extensive programme of training and development, and are intended to rise to senior positions rapidly, said they were not familiar with the term ‘HRD’:

“I’m sorry, but what is ‘HRD’? What does it mean?” (Graduate fast-track manager)

“Don’t really know who they are, what they do or have any contact with them.”

(Graduate fast-track manager)

It is interesting to note that even some training and development specialists indicated that they were not too familiar with the term ‘HRD’, as illustrated by the following comments:

“HRD?...its not a term heard in our organisation...” (Training practitioner)

“Don’t hear the term ‘HRD’...; don’t know the term. It’s very new...” (Training practitioner).

This leads one to wonder the extent to which HRD/Training practitioners might have kept up with firstly, developments in their profession and secondly, what has been written about their area of work. Further, some of the focus group participants used the term 'HR' when they were actually speaking about HRD and training and development activities, suggesting that some participants had difficulty in seeing a difference between the HR and HRD functions. This adds weight to the argument that HRD has an identity problem, that is, it tends to be seen as a subset of the HR function and this adds to HRD’s problem of not being seen as having a clear, distinct and separate identity.

Many participants, especially graduate fast-track managers and the line managers suggested they were more comfortable with the term 'training' than 'HRD'. Several participants made the point that the label ‘training’ was easier to understand than HRD:

“At least you know where you are when you talk about ‘training’... it’s very clear. You

know what to expect.” (Line manager)

It is interesting to note that a few of participants and interviewees even criticised the use of the term ‘training’ and said they favoured the term ‘learning’ instead: *“The word ‘training’ is out; the in word is now ‘learning’.”* (HRD/Training practitioner). Those that commented on this stated that this was because there was a shift in emphasis from the input (that is, training) to the impact of that input (that is, learning).

Returning to the discussion about the term HRD, some participants said not only were they not sure what the term HRD meant but that they also found it ‘artificial’, irritating and off-putting, as illustrated by the following statements:

“I really don’t like the word ‘HRD’; it seems like technobabble. It sounds so impersonal...” (Line manager)

“... ‘HRD’ - sounds contrived.” (Fast-track graduate manager)

On the specific issue of the shift in labelling from training and development to HRD, some participants said they were not sure what this was intended to achieve. A few participants, particularly managers, said they did not appreciate the change in labelling of the function, as illustrated by the comment: *“This constant name changing is off-putting.”* (Line manager)

One participant, in talking about his reservations about the change in name from training and development to HRD, asked, rhetorically, if the name change was simply about following a trend or fad without there being any substantive change in the role of the function: Specifically, he asked: *“What this all about? – bandwagon jumping?”* (Line

manager). A couple of participants sceptically suggested that the name change was meaningless and rather ‘frivolous’ ‘old wine in new bottles’, that is, the name might have changed but the function remained the same in terms of its core activities.

4.3 Perceptions of the HRD/Training Role

4.3.1 General Perceptions of the HRD/Training Role

The interviews and the focus group sessions provided some interesting information about perceptions of the role of HRD. In keeping with the earlier comments about the limited understanding of the term ‘HRD’, many participants said they did not understand the specific nature and scope of the HRD function. This was particularly the case for managers, as illustrated by the comment:

“HRD?...I’m not sure its role is that clear...” (Line manager)

It is suggested that this apparent lack of understanding of the role of HRD/Training within the broader organisation should be an issue of concern to those in the HRD function. If we accept that the effectiveness, or perceived effectiveness, even if only in part, depends on whether or not prospective service users and beneficiaries understand its role within the organisation, then HRD practitioners still have a lot of work to do in terms of communicating their role to others within their organisations.

Even in the case of what most participants agreed was a more easily understood title ‘Training’ – and many said they equated it primarily with training courses aimed at developing knowledge and/or skills - some pointed out this too was a flexibly defined term and could, in practice mean any number of roles and activities:

“There are so many training roles and avenues.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

When probed further during the discussion about the boundaries between HRD and Training, a number of HRD/Training practitioners said they saw HRD and Training as having two distinct functions with HRD being concerned with policy and Training being concerned with delivery:

“The purpose of HRD is to produce policy; training is about delivery.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“HRD – it’s a policy body. Training is about implementing the policy and getting on with the business of developing people.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Although our training unit is a part of HRD, I think of them as a separate function to training. They [HRD] are primarily policy-makers...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

It is interesting to note that this level of distinction was only made by the HRD/Training practitioners taking part in the focus group sessions. Further, a couple of HRD/Training practitioners suggested that HRD, unlike Training, has an over-arching coordinating role:

“HRD...its purpose should be...as one single joined up link between Personnel and training and development and the various providers...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

A few participants when talking about their internal HRD/Training function, came across as irritated and dismissive of the function as irrelevant to their development needs as illustrated by the comments:

“It’s an ad hoc way of organising training...’here, look at this brochure, find something to go on before the end of the financial year’. There is no steer...” (Civil service interviewee)

This sense of annoyance with the HRD/Training function was especially evident in the case of a couple of graduate fast-track managers who typically, as a group, have considerable attention paid to their learning and development:

“They [HRD/Training] are administrators – not concerned about your development.”
(Fast-track manager)

However, in part, this perception could be due to the fact that graduate fast-trackers are encouraged to have a highly developed critical-evaluative approach. What is more interesting is that even some HRD/Training practitioners supported the perception of the role being predominantly administrative:

“...we administer providers...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Responsibility for development is increasingly down to the individual – our role is limited.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

This view might be particularly pertinent to those departments that have largely outsourced training and development, and simply retain a small administrative function which manages delivery contracts. In terms of interviewees, they reported that, overall, the role was primarily about the co-ordination, management and delivery of training and development programmes. This is in keeping with the job advertisements data which

suggested that the main tasks specified in the HRD/Training posts were concerned with training and the management of training and development. Further, some of the interviewees and HRD/Training focus group participants highlighted some changes in their role and its context such as shrinking resources, more contracting out/competitive tendering of programmes, and Investors in People assessments. Some spoke about how their role was increasingly that of a contract manager – writing a product specification, identifying suppliers and evaluating the delivery.

“A lot of our work is now about contract management... commissioning, identifying learning needs, finding consultants to run the programme, making sure that we actually get people to come on the programmes, take part in the learning activity...” (Local government interviewee)

“...we mainly co-ordinate training events..... they are mainly delivered by external consultants...” (HR/Personnel Specialist)

4.3.2 Relationship with HR

Having said this, several of the participants, including the human resources specialists, used the phrases ‘HR’ and ‘HRD’ interchangeably and some described the HRD/Training role in the context of the broader HR/Personnel function:

“Training?... I think of Personnel – dealing with people employed at their place of work.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“As a Personnel branch, HRD sets the policy and then trains or develops staff in line with the organisation’s policy...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

“It’s [HRD/Training] just one part of what our team does... we mainly co-ordinate training events...” (HR/Personnel Specialist)

HR – they just dictate how we should behave...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

What all of this suggests is that HRD/Training tends to be perceived to be a sub-function of HR/Personnel work, with a range of perceptions about its identity, role and activities.

4.3.3 Strategic HRD/Training Role

Opinions about whether or not HRD/Training’s role was strategic were varied. Several participants offered guesses as to what it might mean, such as:

“Is it about taking a wider view of what is going on...?” (Fast-track manager)

“Is it about having a plan...?” (Fast-track manager)

A number of participants emphasised the ‘future oriented’ element of strategic HRD:

“The purpose of the strategic bit of HRD/Training should be to develop thinking and strategy for future training...” (HR/Personnel specialist).

“They now want to create a role in which we are relevant for future needs...”
(HRD/Training practitioner)

When encouraged to identify some of the specific ways in which HRD/Training was becoming strategic, a number of focus group participants emphasised the importance of linking training to business needs and improved performance. Specific examples included the increasing level of 'top-down' demands that HRD/Training be more directly relevant to the work of the organisation:

“Now the attitude is changing. The message now is that management push toward business related courses, and away from developmental courses...and we have to show business benefits of each programme.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

Similarly, some emphasised that HRD/Training now had to take a more structured, rational approach that linked development to business objectives and internal performance management systems:

“In my organisation, our training objectives are supposed to flow from the organisational objectives...and focus on competencies.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“The performance development plan is linked to the performance assessment and review process...and this is linked into individual development plans...the process has become more structured.” (HR/Personnel specialist)

Others highlighted the planning element of strategic HRD and gave examples of developing a training plan and training policy as instances of 'working strategically':

“Yes, our training function has become more strategic – there is more emphasis on planning and analysis...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Has the HRD/Training unit become more strategic? I would say ‘yes’ – it is detached from the coal-face. It seems there to direct not to give line managers a service.”

(HRD/Training practitioner)

In terms of the interviewees, four of them mentioned what they considered to be the strategic aspects of their work gave examples related to the development of training plans, training policies, evaluation and the linking of delivery to corporate goals:

“There are bits of our work that you could call strategic... like we’re supposed to make sure our courses correspond to our team priorities... at the moment we’re having to invest a lot in equality courses because it is one of our departmental objectives...” (Civil service interviewee)

“We’re really having to think about how what we do relates back to our business objectives and priorities...as part of the IiP requirements. We’re also having to think more about what we can afford...” (Civil service interviewee)

“We’re having to give a lot more thought to evaluations, to show what impact certain programmes have had... we have to report back our evaluation results...” (Civil service interviewee)

Overall, many of the HRD/Training practitioners had difficulty specifying ways in which their own practice was 'strategic'. Further, some human resources practitioners were sceptical about the extent to which their function was strategic. One HRD/Training practitioner from a large, multi-site government department highlighted what they saw as

the lack of internal co-ordination as an indicator of their HRD/Training function being non-strategic:

“We’re not very strategic. We’re a large department, with different bits doing different things, sometimes even on the same issue... we often don’t know what is going on...”

(HRD/Training practitioner)

Some participants who expressed some scepticism about HRD/Training being seen as and being treated as strategic within the organisation emphasised what they saw as a divide between the ‘top level strategy and policy’ element of their organisation and the HRD/Training function, and their own area of work:

“Not sure about it. The providers are on the periphery, not involved in the consultations around policy...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

“It’s top to top. Trainers don’t get to see the full picture – they’re just a mouthpiece...”

(HR/Personnel specialist)

Further, it is interesting to note that some of the HRD/Training participants questioned the extent to which there was alignment between the HRD/Training and the organisation’s business strategy and plans or if there was any real encouragement to demonstrate the business benefits of its activities:

“I would have thought being strategic would mean having training linked to strategic business plans...not sure if this is the case in our organisation.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“There’s no cohesive strategy, no way of collating data about people’s development, their needs, or what they get in the way of training...or of the costs or benefits of training.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

Similarly, some of the interviewees expressed some reservations about the extent to which their work was genuinely strategic pointing to the poor link between HRD/Training and business strategy, HRD/Training short-termism in terms of focus, and its limited influence over strategic decisions:

“There is no strategic direction...no link between development and the strategic aim of the organisation...” (Civil service interviewee)

“Developing staff...it’s all very short-term... based on what the organisation needs at the moment not in the future...” (Local government interviewee)

4.3.4 HRD/Training’s Relationship with Line Managers

Some of the focus group participants mentioned the HRD/Training function’s relationship with line managers:

“It is a legitimate part of the manager’s job, to advise and to assist the development of staff, they have responsibility for individuals and should get support from the HRD function...but this is lacking.” (Line manager)

Several of the participants expressed concern about the role of line managers in training and development, particularly in relation to their workloads, capability and consistency in attitude to supporting learning:

“I don’t think it’s fair to devolve HRD responsibility to line managers because they’re very busy...” (Line manager)

“From my experience due to workloads, not much time can be dedicated to HRD/Training.” (Line Manager)

“With the best will in the world, managers can’t spend all their time managing and developing you...” (Fast-track manager)

“On the question of devolvment...managers are untrained and lack the skills for developing staff...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“There’s a problem if the manager has a lack of knowledge or interest in training or developing people...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Developing staff...there is an inconsistency of treatment of staff...some managers don’t care; some staff have more access and some have less access to development support...it’s the luck of the draw who your manager is...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

“...each student should have a development conversation with their manager when they go on a course – but this usually doesn’t happen.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

5. The State & Status of the HRD/Training function

5.1 Concern about General State of HRD/Training

Some of the HRD/Training practitioners were concerned about the general state of HRD/Training in their departments. Some reported that the function was fragmented, uncoordinated across the department:

“HRD/Training in my organisation...it’s fragmented (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Training in our department...it’s disjointed; it has very poor communication...”
(HRD/Training practitioner)

“... the centre of HRD/Training...it sits in an ivory tower and thinks about it but doesn’t consult practitioners...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

In this thesis it is argued that HRD/Training’s status as a valued, professional activity is dependant in part on others perceiving it as an area of work requiring specialist knowledge and skill, and one which adds value to those in the organisation. The fact that several participants said they saw it as mainly an administrative function and one that did not require any specialist skill could explain its apparent poor organisational status:

“[When I think of training and development] ...I think of our learning management system – a faceless computer system, administrative...” (Line Manager)

5.2 Changes affecting the HRD/Training Role

In discussions about the changes affecting the work of the HRD/Training function, the human resources specialists mainly emphasised increasing resource constraints and the impact of technology, Investors in People, and outsourcing on delivery:

“[Changes] ...the introduction of new technology, budget and staff cuts, complex reorganisation of HR delivery...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

A number of human resources specialists commented on the impact of cuts in public sector budgets on their internal training and development unit. Some emphasized cuts in staffing levels and levels of delivery:

“Training and development is limited...we have huge budgetary constraints...”
(HR/Personnel specialist)

“As always, we’re under pressure to do more and more with fewer resources.” (Local government interviewee)

Some emphasized the increasing level of financial scrutiny and control of Training budgets:

“In terms changes...we have an audit of our training programmes going on...the transfer of financial control of training from HR to the finance directorate is being looked at...”
(HRD/Training practitioner)

One HRD/Training practitioner referred to possible changes in funding arrangements whereby they would move to a position of charging internal customers:

“There are some changes...the unit is going to move from an office-based to a service-desk organisation (call centre). The training unit is very likely to move to a trading fund status – charging external customers...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

They pointed out that they now had to rationalise their provision and to concentrate on programmes that were aligned to the needs of the department.

“There is so much talk of change. There are so many changes going on in government departments right now, with all the modernisation and reform initiatives, and we’re really having to think about how we can support the types of changes we need to make in our department...” (Civil service interviewee)

Another issue that human resources specialists highlighted was changes in the delivery format. They confirmed that there had been some changes in terms of the structure of some of their delivery, and that there was a broadening of the types of programmes they were being asked to set up and deliver, including coaching, mentoring, action learning networks, and self-managed learning programmes. One specific change that many HRD/Training practitioners mentioned was that training courses had become shorter in duration and more modular-based:

“The main change has been that courses have got shorter – whereas, before we might have been running the same courses for a couple of weeks, we now run in a couple of days.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“One of the biggest changes is that courses have got shorter, they now tend to be modular rather than being in one big block.” (Civil service interviewee)

The theme of Investors in People (IiP), an initiative closely associated, in the public sector, with learning and development, was another issue that some people commented on. While some described it as a generally positive initiative that signalled an organisation’s commitment to training and development, many more expressed a more sceptical viewpoint. The sceptics offered a variety of explanations,

“IiP (Investors in People) – it’s just lip-service. There is a flurry of activity around assessment time...” (Line manager)

“...we are driven by the pursuit of IiP [Investors in People] without much thought about what this means for people...” (Line manager)

“...regarding IiP, things are getting better...we suddenly get a lot of activity around assessment time...but I’m ambivalent about the impetus lasting...I’m concerned about the lack of continuity...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“I can’t see how we’ve got IiP...the strategic vision is not translated into development activities...it’s too detached from the development process...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

5.3 Question of Value

The value of the HRD/Training function emerged as a main theme during the focus group discussions. Some of the participants emphasised the internal value of the HRD/Training function and the value it added to the individual employee/learner:

“Training is an important area of work – I would put it on par with IT and Personnel in terms of importance to the internal running of the department rather than its presentation to the outside world...” (Line manager)

“I believe in good training; it can really make a difference to people in your organisation – it’s where I felt most useful.” (HRD/Training practitioner).

“Training is very important and of great benefit to staff, if done properly.”
(HRD/Training practitioner)

“It is important work, and I think the people in our organisation would say that...”
(Local government interviewee)

Many of the interviewees spoke about the value they personally derived from their work.

All of these commented how much they enjoyed ‘being in the classroom’:

“You get a real buzz from standing up there in front of the group... it’s really great finding ways to get them engaged...the longer courses can be exhausting but I love it.”
(Civil service interviewee)

“I still get a real buzz out of working with a group of learners; it’s really great when you ‘click’, and get on the same wavelength as them. It’s enormously rewarding...” (Civil service interviewee)

“I like what I do: it’s a ‘people’ job.” (Local government interviewee)

One of the interviewees pointed out that being in a HRD/Training role has limited her career mobility and career options:

“I’ve been in this job for many years – it’s hard to move out into another role, unless it’s another training job...” (Civil service interviewee)

In terms of managers, some experience of HRD/Training or knew someone in that area spoke positively about it, others were less positive about the role of HRD/Training, as the following comments illustrate:

“I think of training...sitting in a room, with not much material, most of which is out of date...” (Line manager)

I think the company won’t fail in the short term if there is no training programme.” (Fast-track manager)

“There is a lack of disconnect and consistency between the corporate words on development and reality...the information we get is poor quality.” (Line manager)

“There is a problem of what you are entitled to, who decides this and what it includes...does it include coaching, mentoring...?” (Line manager)

“I was given a massive manual and told to get on with it...there was no guidance or development support...” (Line manager)

“I have a better experience of the university HRD function in terms of developing my skills and pointing me in the right direction, compared with HR in the civil service which seems to be focused on cheaper options for learning.” (Fast-track manager)

“It’s hard to track down HRD specialists in the civil service; it’s hard to get good HRD advice.” (Line manager)

“In terms of career development, so much is done on the grapevine; career development is very haphazard and arbitrary; it’s down to having good people in HRD.” (Line manager)

5.4 Perceptions of HRD/Training’s Image & Reputations

The image of the HRD/Training function was another important theme that emerged during the focus group meetings. Overall, most of the participants suggested that HRD/Training has a poor image, as illustrated by the comments below:

“You hear lots of negative stuff about it, and tend to bypass it...” (Fast-track graduate manager)

“Yes, Personnel/Training does have a poor image... people don’t understand what they do...” (Line manager)

“Not a glamorous place to work but I guess it is essential for development, even retention of staff.” (Line manager)

“Pretty low level people are put into HR...” (Line manager)

“I ask how well qualified or competent are the people running such courses...I am dubious about their ability to deliver something meaningful.” (Fast-track manager)

“The quality of training practice varies...some of it is really basic and a bit pointless...” (Line manager)

It was interesting to hear the comments of some fast-track managers about whether or not they would ever choose to work in HRD/Training, especially given that firstly, early in their career, they have an opportunity, guided by a senior manager, to experience working in many different organisational functions, and secondly, they are likely to move rapidly into senior, influential positions within the civil service.

“I wouldn’t choose to work in training... you hear people say that it’s where they put people before they retire...” (Fast-track manager)

“I am at the beginning of my career and have been advised to go into areas like policy, or finance...and not to touch training with a barge-pole...” (Fast-track manager)

“...HRD is probably interesting but has a poor reputation which is off-putting” (Fast-track manager).

Many of the HRD/Training practitioners also questioned the perceived value of their function, emphasising that they were increasingly having to do more with fewer resources:

“Every year our training budget is cut, limiting what we can do...(local government interviewee)

“Even if we arrange a course costing say, £20,000, the day before the course managers pull people off the course. Training doesn’t have much importance...” (civil service interviewee)

“Lots of people get to a certain grade and feel they don’t need training anymore and won’t show up for the course; this is especially the case for higher grades; they have a poor attitude to training...” (local government interviewee)

“Training is on the back-burner...HRD staff are demoralised... the demand is still there but the business has to come first...” (civil service focus group participant)

“Certain functions relate to the core business and are high priority – training comes low down; its not seen as part of the core business.”(civil service focus group participant)

5.5 HRD/Training’s Professional Status

While there was a mix of responses, many participants did raise concerns about the professional status of HRD/Training. Specific concerns included the level of qualifications of HRD/Training practitioners, the fact that there seemed open access to the area of practice, and the lack of professional regulation:

“Only in a limited sense – because of the qualification issue; anyone can get into training...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

“In training the grades are low; so I would say, it is questionable...” (local government HRD/Training practitioner)

“In a profession, the work is regulated and monitored; in training it is not.” (Line manager)

Some HRD/Training practitioners made the point that HRD/Training was now had greater status as a profession because those working in it were now better qualified:

“Yes - now people working in training have to be more professionally qualified eg: CIPD qualified. It has changed ... there is more emphasis on continuing professional development...” (local government HRD/Training practitioner)

A couple of people made the point that HRD/Training could be seen as a profession insofar as a profession is recognised by the fact it has its own specialist professional language:

“It [HRD/Training] has a certain amount of gobbledy-gook, jargon that gives the impression that you need to be a specialist to understand it...” (Fast-track manager)

6. Summary & Concluding Comments

This chapter reports the findings of the focus group meetings and the HRD/Training practitioner interviews. Both methods served to provide useful insights into the role, position and context of the HRD/Training function in UK government organisations and helped give some direction to the design of the survey.

It was interesting to note the mix of responses about HRD/Training's role and the questions raised about the extent to which it is genuinely strategic in orientation. Some of the participants referred to the lack of meaningful connection between HRD/Training activity and business strategy as an example of the function failing to work in a strategic way. One possible explanation for this might be that some of these participants were in a mid-level, front-end training and development delivery role and not exposed to some of the more higher level issues and forums where the HRD/Training's strategic contribution might be more evident.

Finally, to have made the process more representative and meaningful, it would have been interesting to have run more focus groups but this was not possible in the time available. It took time to set up each of the focus groups, having to work through several levels of people in order to get the meetings set up. More particularly, it would have been useful to have held some focus group sessions with local government participants but again due to time constraints and the problem of limited access to those working in local government, this was not possible. The next chapter discusses the findings of the survey.

Chapter 6

Survey Data Analysis

“...the design of a survey, besides requiring a certain amount of technical knowledge, is a prolonged and arduous intellectual exercise, in the course of which we are trying to get our own minds clear about our goals.” (Oppenheim 1972 p.3)

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the survey disseminated to public sector organizations within the UK as part of this study. Only selective, that is, the most important and relevant, aspects of the survey data are presented and discussed in the following sections. These will cover two main areas: respondents' perceptions of, firstly, changes to the role and status of the HRD/Training function, and secondly, of the organisational and occupational status of HRD/Training at the time of the survey.

2. Survey Sample

As a reminder, questionnaires were sent to 1,797 individuals working in central and local government organisations that were listed on the Centre for Management and Policy Studies (now renamed the National School of Government) database during September 2004. The database included contact details of people who had had contact with the organisation in the past year and it was used to select a sample of the three types of respondents the survey was targeted at, that is HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers in public sector organization. The database included names and

contact details of 19, 115 public sector HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers of which 14, 995 were managers (649 in local government and 14, 346 in the civil service), 1912 were HR specialists (208 local government and 1704 in the civil service), and 2208 were HRD/Training specialists (478 local government and 2160 in the civil service). The sample population was selected using random sampling.

The database was segmented into the three role categories. Of the local government managers available, 324 were randomly selected from the list of 649, and of the civil service managers, 326 were randomly selected from the list of 14, 346. Given the relatively small number of local government HR/Personnel listed, all 208 were selected. Of the civil service HR/Personnel listed, 340 were randomly selected from the list of 1,740. Of the local government HRD/T specialists listed, 239 were randomly selected, and 360 civil service HRD/Training specialists were randomly selected. Accordingly, of the sample, 771 (43%) were in local government and 1026 (57%) in the civil service. Of the total sample, 650 (36%) were managers, 548 (31%) were HR/Personnel specialists, and 599 (33%) were HRD/Training specialists. The aim was to get, as far as was possible, a balance between the numbers in each of the three roles.

A total of 305 usable questionnaires were returned constituting a response rate of 16%. Although Nijhoff (2005) and Steiff & Tegg (1998) suggest this level of response rate is consistent with similar surveys, the response low rate for this survey is problematic. It raises questions about how representative of the general population the results are and limits the types of conclusions that can be drawn from it. Although a letter of reminder was sent out to prospective respondents it did not significantly increase the number of responses.

It is clearly worth reflecting on what factors might have led to the poor response rate. Willimack, Nichols and Sudman (2002) offer a useful analysis of the factors that can affect survey response rates. Their analysis, based on qualitative exploratory research of survey response rates in large multi-unit firms, identified sets of factors that can influence the response rate, categorised into those within the control of the researcher and those out of the researcher's control.

Factors out of the researcher control include, for example, the survey climate. This includes factors such as the number of survey requests an organisation receives, company policy, the status of the survey (whether or not it is seen as a formal requirement), staff availability to respond to surveys, data availability, and respondent characteristics (for example, having the authority to provide the data requested, knowledge of the data sought, and motivation to complete the questionnaire). Factor within the researcher's control mainly relate to the survey design and mode of implementation. This includes the specific sample, the survey topic, the survey design (content and complexity), mode of dissemination, time schedules, survey sponsor, contact strategies, use of incentives, and data confidentiality.

In hindsight, in the case of this study, more attention could have been given to anticipating and managing the impact of some of these factors. For example, the survey's length might have deterred some respondents; it could have been shortened and certain questions could have been reframed for ease of use. Also, as a way of better engaging prospective respondents, perhaps a pre-survey letter could have been sent out alerting

them to the survey. It would have been helpful to have done follow-up interviews with non-respondents to identify why people did not complete the survey, however lack of time and lack of telephone details for many of those in sample population were two of the reasons for this not taking place.

3. Sector/Type of Organisation

As a reminder, the survey was only targeted at public sector organisations. In terms of respondents, the largest number of respondents was drawn from local government organisations (55.7%) and just over a third (36%) of the respondents were based in civil service departments and agencies (Table 6.1). The remainder were located in the voluntary sector or other public bodies, even though they had not been targeted. It is assumed that this latter responses occurred because there was some error in the original database.

Table 6.1: Type of Respondent Organisation

Sector	n.	%
Local Government	170	55.7
Civil Service	110	36.1
Other	25	8.2
Total	305	100.0

As shown in Table 6.2, of the total number of respondents, 108 (35.4%) were HRD/Training practitioners, 102 (33.4%) were HR/Personnel specialists and 95 (31.1%) were managers. 64.8% of the HRD/Training specialist survey respondents were in local government and 26.9% were in the civil service. The remainder (8%) were in other public sector/third sector organisations. Further, 41.1% of managers were in local government and 54.7% were in the civil service. It is interesting to note that of the 110 respondents located in the civil service, the largest number, 47.3%, were managers, compared with 26.9% in HRD/Training and the same number in HR/Personnel.

Table 6.2: Survey Respondents' Role & Sector

Role	Frequency	Local Government	Civil Service
HRD Specialist	Count	70	29
	% within Job title	64.8%	26.9%
	% within Sector Type	41.2%	26.4%
HR Specialist	Count	61	29
	% within Job title	59.8%	28.4%
	% within Sector Type	35.9%	26.4%
Manager	Count	39	52
	% within Job title	41.1%	54.7%
	% within Sector Type	22.9%	47.3%
Total	Count	170	110

4. Respondents' Gender

In terms of respondents' gender, there were more female respondents than male. Of the total of 305 respondents, 171 were female and 131 were male. Of the male respondents, 43 were HRD specialists, 41 were HR specialists and 47 were managers. Of the female respondents, 65 were HRD specialists, 61 were HR specialists and 45 were managers. Although the number of men and women respondents in the manager category was nearly balanced (47:45), as a percentage of the total number of respondents, fewer women respondents (26.3%) were managers than men (35.9%). In parallel, a greater number of respondents in a HRD and HR role were female (Table 6.3). This is not surprising given that the profession of Personnel is traditionally seen as a 'female' occupation.

Table 6.3: Respondents' Role & Gender Cross-tabulated

		gender			Total
		NR	male	female	
Job title	HRD Specialist	0	43	65	108
	HR Specialist	0	41	61	102
	Manager	3	47	45	95
Total		3	131	171	305

5. Respondents' Qualifications

Overall, 49% of the respondents reported having a HR or HRD/Training qualification. Of the HRD specialists, more than half - 67.5% - reported having a professional (HR/HRD) qualification, compared with 62.7% of HR/Personnel specialists. 13.7% of the managers reported having a HR/HRD qualification.

Of the total number of respondents, 44% indicated they held other qualifications (including degrees, managerial and technical qualifications). Only 7% of the respondents indicated that they held no qualifications. This data is summarised in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Respondents' Job Title & Qualifications Cross-tabulated

Qualification/ Job Title	HR/HRD/ Training	Other	None	Total
HRD/Training Specialist	73 (67.5%)	31 (28.7%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (100%)
HR Specialist	64 (62.75)	32 (31.4%)	6 (5.8%)	102 (100%)
Manager	13 (13.7)	71 (74.7%)	11 (11.6%)	95 (100%)
Total	150 (49%)	134 (44%)	21 (7%)	305 (100%)

Crosstabulating the data for respondents' gender with respondents' qualifications showed that nearly twice as many female respondents - 60.2% - indicated they held a professional, HR/HRD qualification compared with 35.9% of male respondents. Further, 58% of the male respondents indicated they held other qualifications (degrees, management and technical qualifications) compared with 33.9% of the female respondents.

6. Reporting Line

The reporting line was taken to be one of the indicators of the position and status of the HRD/Training function within UK public sector organisations. In terms of findings, according to the data more than half (53.4%) the Heads of the HRD/Training function reported to the Head of Human Resources/Personnel. By comparison, significantly fewer, 11.1%, reported to a Chief Executive (CEO) Director General or Management Board. Table 6.5 provides details of the data. This data would suggest that in terms of organisation structure, the HRD/Training function still tends to be treated as a sub-set of the Human Resources function.

Table 6.5: Heads of HRD/Training Function Reporting Line

		head of function reports to whom			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Don't Know	10	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Head of HR	163	53.4	53.4	56.7
	Head of Central/Corporate Services	34	11.1	11.1	67.9
	CEO/Perm.Sec.	34	11.1	11.1	79.0
	Management Board	34	11.1	11.1	90.2
	Other	30	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	305	100.0	100.0	

The next section presents the details of findings of the survey. It begins with a consideration of the data related to the perceived status of the HRD/Training function, including reporting on the internal functions and occupations rankings, and then moves onto an examination of the extent to which the function is seen as having changed over time. It was felt that including this section of the survey was a way of getting some measure of respondents' perceptions of status that would allow for some comparison of responses across the three roles. The four dimensions used in the ranking section were those that were also identified in the pre-survey focus groups sessions and meetings as some of the features influencing perceptions of the role of HRD/Training.

7. The Status of the HRD/Training Function

7.1 Ranking Internal Organisational Functions

As a reminder, respondents were asked to rank ten internal organisational functions on four different dimensions - career advancement potential, level of qualification, power and influence in relation to others, and value to the organisation. The score of '1' was given to the function scoring highest on the specific dimension and '10' for the lowest scoring. The cumulative scores of the individual ranking of the four dimensions were used to determine the overall relative status ranking of each of the ten organisational functions. A summary of the rankings is given in Table 7.6. In terms of results, Finance was given the highest ranking in terms of overall status and HRD/Training was ranked 8th. The rankings for each of the four dimensions - Career Advancement, Level of Qualifications, Power and Influence, and Value to the Organisation – are given in Table 6.7, below.

Table 6.6: Overall Ranking of Internal Organisational Functions

Rank	Function
1	Finance
2	Legal Services
3	HR/Personnel
4	Policy Work
5	Corporate Planning
6	CEO/Private Office
7	Information Technology
8	HRD/Training
9	Communication Services
10	Procurement

Table 6.7: Ranking Internal Functions across Four Dimensions

Rank	Career Advancement	Qualifications	Power/Influence	Value to Organisation
1	Finance	Legal Services	CEO/Private Office	Finance
2	Policy Work	Finance	Finance	HR/Personnel
3	Corporate Planning	HR/Personnel	Legal Services	Corporate Planning
4	Information Technology	Information Technology	Corporate Planning	Legal Services
5	Legal Services	HRD/Training	Policy Work	Information Technology
6	CEO/Private Office	Policy Work	HR/Personnel	Policy Work
7	HR/Personnel	Corporate Planning	Information Technology	HRD/Training
8	Communication Service	Procurement	HRD/Training	CEO/Private Office
9	HRD/Training	CEO/Private Office	Communication Service	Communication Service
10	Procurement	Communication	Procurement	Procurement

Overall, the results indicated that the perceived status of the HRD/Training as an internal function was comparatively weak. The findings suggest that while respondents recognised that those working in the HRD/Training function did require some level of qualifications and had some organisational value, its value in terms of career advancement and power and influence was ranked low. This finding is supported by the post-survey group discussion as presented in Chapter 7.

Further, the data was examined to determine if there was an association between the responses and the role of the respondent. The results of chi-squared tests on the data in Table 7.8, Table 7.9, Table 7.10 and Table 7.11 suggest that there was a statistically significant association between the rankings of HRD/Training and managers on only one of the four dimensions, that is, the level of qualification dimension ($p=0.007$, $0.007 < 0.05$). The level of qualification ranking HRD/Training practitioners rated much higher than managers was rank 3 suggesting that compared with managers, HRD/Training practitioners had a more positive view of the level of qualifications required of those working in the HRD/Training function. Further, the results suggest there did not appear to be a statistically significant association in the rankings and the responses of managers and HRD/Training practitioners on the other three dimensions, that is, career advancement potential dimension ($p=0.38$, $0.38 > 0.05$), power and influence ($p = 0.82$, $0.82 > 0.05$) and value to the organization ($p = 0.48$, $0.48 > 0.05$), therefore the null hypotheses for all three were accepted. It is interesting to compare this with the feedback from the focus group meetings, especially the comments from some fast-stream civil service managers who reported that HRD/Training was not seen as being an area to work in if you were interested in advancing your career.

Table 6.9: Level of Qualifications Rankings cross-tabulated with Job Title

Job title	NR	ranking by level of qualification HRD/Training										Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
HRD Specialist	26	1	4	12	18	14	20	3	5	3	2	108
% within Job title	24.1%	.9%	3.7%	11.1%	16.7%	13.0%	18.5%	2.8%	4.6%	2.8%	1.9%	100.0%
% of Total	8.5%	.3%	1.3%	3.9%	5.9%	4.6%	6.6%	1.0%	1.6%	1.0%	.7%	35.4%
HR Specialist	25	2	3	9	12	13	11	7	8	5	7	102
% within Job title	24.5%	2.0%	2.9%	8.8%	11.8%	12.7%	10.8%	6.9%	7.8%	4.9%	6.9%	100.0%
% of Total	8.2%	.7%	1.0%	3.0%	3.9%	4.3%	3.6%	2.3%	2.6%	1.6%	2.3%	33.4%
Manager	24	0	1	2	13	13	16	7	6	7	6	95
% within Job title	25.3%	.0%	1.1%	2.1%	13.7%	13.7%	16.8%	7.4%	6.3%	7.4%	6.3%	100.0%
% of Total	7.9%	.0%	.3%	.7%	4.3%	4.3%	5.2%	2.3%	2.0%	2.3%	2.0%	31.1%
Total	75	3	8	23	43	40	47	17	19	15	15	305
% within Job title	24.6%	1.0%	2.6%	7.5%	14.1%	13.1%	15.4%	5.6%	6.2%	4.9%	4.9%	100.0%
% of Total	24.6%	1.0%	2.6%	7.5%	14.1%	13.1%	15.4%	5.6%	6.2%	4.9%	4.9%	100.0%

Table 6.10: Power & Influence Rankings cross-tabulated with Job Title

Job title	NR	ranking by level of power and influence over people HRD/Training										Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
HRD Specialist	Count	1	1	1	6	13	20	16	9	10	9	108
	% within Job title	.9%	.9%	.9%	5.6%	12.0%	18.5%	14.8%	8.3%	9.3%	8.3%	100.0%
HR Specialist	Count	2	1	5	5	9	16	12	11	11	6	102
	% within Job title	2.0%	1.0%	4.9%	4.9%	8.8%	15.7%	11.8%	10.8%	10.8%	5.9%	100.0%
Manager	Count	1	1	3	6	4	9	15	14	12	9	95
	% within Job title	1.1%	1.1%	3.2%	6.3%	4.2%	9.5%	15.8%	14.7%	12.6%	9.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	3	9	17	26	45	43	34	33	24	305
	% within Job title	1.3%	1.0%	3.0%	5.6%	8.5%	14.8%	14.1%	11.1%	10.8%	7.9%	100.0%
		1.3%	1.0%	3.0%	5.6%	8.5%	14.8%	14.1%	11.1%	10.8%	7.9%	100.0%

Table 6.11: Value to Organisation Rankings cross-tabulated with Job Title

Job title	NR	ranking by value to organisation HRD/Training										Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
HRD Specialist	30	7	6	14	9	9	12	5	8	6	2	108
Count												
% within Job title	27.8%	6.5%	5.6%	13.0%	8.3%	8.3%	11.1%	4.6%	7.4%	5.6%	1.9%	100.0%
% of Total	9.8%	2.3%	2.0%	4.6%	3.0%	3.0%	3.9%	1.6%	2.6%	2.0%	.7%	35.4%
HR Specialist	24	2	3	10	15	10	11	10	9	6	2	102
Count												
% within Job title	23.5%	2.0%	2.9%	9.8%	14.7%	9.8%	10.8%	9.8%	8.8%	5.9%	2.0%	100.0%
% of Total	7.9%	.7%	1.0%	3.3%	4.9%	3.3%	3.6%	3.3%	3.0%	2.0%	.7%	33.4%
Manager	19	2	8	12	6	9	11	13	4	7	4	95
Count												
% within Job title	20.0%	2.1%	8.4%	12.6%	6.3%	9.5%	11.6%	13.7%	4.2%	7.4%	4.2%	100.0%
% of Total	6.2%	.7%	2.6%	3.9%	2.0%	3.0%	3.6%	4.3%	1.3%	2.3%	1.3%	31.1%
Total	73	11	17	36	30	28	34	28	21	19	8	305
Count												
% within Job title	23.9%	3.6%	5.6%	11.8%	9.8%	9.2%	11.1%	9.2%	6.9%	6.2%	2.6%	100.0%
% of Total	23.9%	3.6%	5.6%	11.8%	9.8%	9.2%	11.1%	9.2%	6.9%	6.2%	2.6%	100.0%

7.2 Ranking Occupational Status

As a way of exploring perceptions of the status of HRD/Training, as well as ranking a set of internal functions, respondents were invited to rank 10 occupations across four different dimensions: Standard of Living, Level of Qualification, Power & Influence and Value to Society. The results are summarised in Table 6.12, below.

Table 6.12: Overall Ranking of 10 Occupations

Rank	Overall Rank	Standard Of Living	Level of Qualification	Power & Influence	Value to Society
1	Doctor	Doctor	Doctor	Doctor	Doctor
2	Lecturer	Accountant	Lecturer	Teacher	Nursing
3	Teacher	Lecturer	Accountant	Lecturer	Physiotherapist
4	Accountant	HR/Personnel	Physiotherapist	Nursing	Teacher
5	Nursing	Physiotherapist	Teacher	Accountant	Lecturer
6	Physiotherapist	Teacher	Nursing	HR/Personnel	HRD/Training
7	HRD/Training	HRD/Training	HR/Personnel	Physiotherapist	Accountant
8	HR/Personnel	Nursing	HRD/Training	HRD/Training	Cleaner
9	Porter	Porter	Porter	Porter	Porter
10	Cleaner	Cleaner	Cleaner	Cleaner	HR/Personnel

A chi-squared analysis was carried out on the data in Table 6.13, Table 6.14, Table 6.15 and Table 6.16. The results suggest that for all four dimensions, there was not a statistically significant association between the rankings and the respondents' role, as shown by the results: Standard of Living ($p= 0.16, 0.16 > 0.05$), Level of Qualification ($p= 0.22, 0.22 > 0.05$), Level of Power ($p= 0.16, 0.16 > 0.05$), and Value to Society ($p=0.09, 0.09 > 0.05$). This suggests that, allowing for small variations, there was a high level of consistency in the perceptions of the status of the HRD/Training function when

compared with nine other occupational groups, across all three groups of respondents. This is particularly interesting because it had been assumed that respondents working in HRD/Training would have ranked themselves higher, at least on the Value to the Organisation dimension given the emphasis in the literature about the value of training in strengthening the national skills base and business performance (Leitch, 2006). One explanation for this finding could be that HRD/Training practitioners have a realistic perception of the value. Another possible explanation could be that, as suggested by some of the HRD/Training practitioners in the post-survey discussions, that is a reflects that they are aware of the perceptions others hold of their role, that they have internalised this, become resigned to it/accepted it and play it back in their their relatively low ranking of HRD/Training on the Value to Society dimension.

Table 6.13: Ranking HRD/Training on Standard of Living Dimension cross-tabulated with Respondents' Role

Ranking of Standard of Living						
Role/ Rank	HRD/Training		HR/Personnel		Manager	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
NR	23	7.5	25	8.2	20	6.6
1	1	0.9	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	0.9	0	0
3	5	4.6	2	1.9	5	5.2
4	10	9.2	10	9.8	6	6.3
5	23	21.3	19	18.6	17	17.8
6	23	21.3	25	24.5	16	16.8
7	15	13.9	10	9.8	22	23.1
8	8	7.4	10	9.8	9	9.4
Total	108	100	102	100	95	100

Table 6.14: Ranking HRD/Training on Level of Qualifications dimension cross-tabulated with Respondents' Job Title

Ranking of Level of Qualifications						
Role/ Rank	HRD/Training		HR/Personnel		Manager	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
NR						
2	3	2.7	0	0	0	0
3	5	4.6	2	1.9	2	2.1
4	8	7.4	4	3.9	2	2.1
5	7	6.4	9	8.8	4	4.2
6	11	10.1	10	9.8	13	13.6
7	20	18.5	24	23.5	23	24.2
8	31	28.7	27	26.4	29	30.5
9	0	0	1	0.9	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Total	108	100	102	100	95	100

Table 6.15: Ranking HRD/Training on Power & Influence dimension cross-tabulated with Respondents' Role

Ranking of Level of Power & Influence						
Role/Rank	HRD/Training		HR/Personnel		Manager	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
NR						
1	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
2	2	1.8	1	0.9	1	1.1
3	7	6.4	6	5.8	5	5.2
4	2	1.8	5	4.9	9	9.4
5	17	15.7	8	7.8	6	6.3
6	20	18.5	19	18.6	15	15.7
7	18	16.6	12	11.7	19	20
8	18	16.6	23	22.5	15	15.7
9	1	0.9	1	0.9	2	2.1
10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	108	100	102	100	95	100

Table 6.16: Ranking HRD/Training on Value to Society dimension cross-tabulated with Respondents'

Role

Ranking of Value to Society						
Role/Rank	HRD/Training		HR/Personnel		Manager	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
NR						
1	3	2.7	1	0.9	1	1.1
2	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
3	3	2.7	2	1.9	0	0
4	6	5.5	3	2.9	3	3.1
5	9	8.3	6	5.8	8	8.4
6	21	19.4	14	13.7	10	10.5
7	18	16.6	14	13.7	17	17.8
8	14	12.9	19	18.6	15	15.7
9	4	3.7	8	7.8	11	11.5
10	2	1.8	5	4.9	6	6.3
Total	108	100	102	100	95	100

8. Non-Response to Rankings Section

Before moving onto the next section, it is worth commenting on the non-response rate for this part of the survey. On each dimension, on average, about a quarter of the respondents did not complete the two ranking sections. Further, the data shows that the non-response to the two ranking sections was slightly higher for HRD/Training and HR/Personnel specialists than managers.

The non-responses reflect, as suggested by some of the comments in the feedback to the pilot survey and in the post-survey group discussions, respondents' reluctance to complete

a section of the survey that they felt some unease about. The main reason given for this was that they did not believe it was fair to rate groups of people based on subjective perceptions, as illustrated by two respondents' statement made during the post-survey interviews: *"I don't feel comfortable about this. It is wrong to judge others in such a crude way"* and *"This idea of judging others in this grossly generalized way is wrong"*. Some people said that they were wary of doing so could lead to and/or reinforces unwelcome stereotyping of groups of people.

To some extent, this is not too surprising given that the respondents were all working in public sector organisations, most of which are subject to various types of equality and diversity policies and regulations (UNDEAS, 2001), and are likely to be sensitised to the risks and unacceptability of making and expressing judgements that might be seen by others as inappropriate stereotyping.

More generally, this does raise questions about the legitimacy and value of including survey questions that have the effect of making respondents feel uncomfortable. Should questions that might make respondents uneasy or unhappy always be excluded? What impact would this have on the scope of the research, and on its neutrality and independence? Clearly, it is important, ethically and professionally not to employ survey questions that will be offensive, to exercise sensitivity to how questions might be experienced by prospective respondents and to frame the enquiry in such a way that it does not cause distress to respondents, and jeopardise the entire research process.

Although this is a matter of judgement for the individual researcher, it is suggested that, for the sake of authentic and meaningful enquiry (that is, one which tests and pushes out

the boundaries of conventional understanding of problems) the researcher has a responsibility to not be inappropriately constrained by the prospect of getting a non-response to a question or to be overwhelmed by the sense of personal risk in handling negative responses. Further, in the case of the rankings, given that, as an approach, it was one that had been used in the well-established and influential study of Goldthorpe and Hope (1974), it was felt to be an appropriate one to use. Both these reflections influenced the decision to retain this part of the questionnaire.

Having said all this, it is clear that this part of the survey would have benefitted from a rethink and redesign. In hindsight, it might have been more appropriate to have conducted the ranking exercise in face-to-face interviews which would have allowed the researcher and respondent to have discussed any concerns arising from the exercise. Also, given that this was a postal survey which excluded the possibility of an explanatory discussion, it would have helped to have flagged up in the introductory letter that there were items in the survey which some respondents might find difficult, and to have given explained why such items were included as a way of tempering potential negative reactions. It would also have been helpful to have created a debrief sheet which explained in more detail the purpose and importance of the study and the choice of questions and areas examined. Returning to the theme of the status of HRD/Training, the survey also attempted to identify the factor that influence perceptions of the status of HRD/Training. This is dealt with in the next section.

9. Factors Influencing HRD/Training's Status

As another way of trying to understand the factors that influenced perceptions of the status of HRD/Training, the survey asked respondents to rank in order of importance a list of 10 factors which they believed would most help the HRD/Training function strengthen its status, with rank 1 being the highest. As a reminder, these factors were selected because they were the main ones identified in the literature as important to HRD/Training's effectiveness and status (Garavan et al 1993; 2001; McCracken & Wallace, 2001). Table 6.17, below, summarises the results.

The findings show that both HRD/Training specialists and managers rated several factors highly, including *demonstrating links between its role and performance* (Table 6.17). This is consistent with the continuing concern in the literature with the relationship between HRD/Training and performance (Zenger, 1980) and with the observations made by some of those taking part in the focus group discussions.

Table 6. 17: Ranking of 10 Factors for Improving HRD/Training's Status

Rank	Factor	%
1	demonstrating links between its role and performance	78.4
2	stronger partnership with managers	75.7
3	having greater access to and more visible top management support	62.0
4	more organisation development & change management expertise	59.0
5	making the role more clear and explicit	58.7
6	demonstrating specialist and exclusive knowledge and expertise	46.6
7	demonstrating a more evidence-based/research-based approach	38.4
8	stronger partnership with HR/Personnel	25.6
9	only employing professionally qualified staff	16.7
10	direct reporting line to CEO/Permanent Secretary	14.4

Table 6.18: Comparison of Responses of HRD/Training Practitioners & Managers: Ranking Status Factors

Status Factors	HRD/Training Practitioners %	Managers %	P-Value
Links between its role & performance	78.7%	75.8%	.623
Making role more clear& explicit	59.3%	55.8%	.620
Specialist expertise & exclusive knowledge	51.95	46.3%	.434
Reporting line to CEO/ Permanent Secretary	18.5%	8.4%	.038
Stronger partnership with managers	80.6%	69.5%	.068
Stronger partnership with HR/Personnel	31.5%	17.9%	.026
Organisation development/ change expertise	62%	47.4%	.036
Evidence-/research-based approach	48.1%	31.6%	.016
Employing qualified staff	8.3%	25.3%	.001
Access to/more visible top management support	70.4%	48.4%	.001

Further, chi-squared tests on the rankings in suggest that there was an association between the role of the respondents and the ranking of two out of the ten dimensions, namely *Employing more qualified staff* (p-value: 0.001) and *Access to/more visible top management support* (p-value: 0.001). Specifically, managers (25.3%) rated *Employing more professionally qualified staff* in the function significantly higher than HRD/Training respondents (8.3%) It is interesting to note that the literature on the development of professions suggests that professional qualifications are an important influence on perceptions of the status of an area of work (Mclaughlin & Webstere 1998) and while

over two-thirds of the HRD/Training respondents in this survey had a professional qualification, most - 91.1% - of them did not cite this as being an important factor in strengthening their status. This raises questions about the value HRD/Training practitioners place on professional qualifications. Moving on, the following section considers the some of the ratings of factors influencing the status of the HRD/Training function in more detail.

10. Top Management Support for the HRD/Training Function

The findings of the survey show that as well as giving a relatively high ranking to '*Access to/and visible support from top managers*' as a factor influencing the status of the HRD/Training function, more HRD/Training practitioners than managers suggested that if more Heads of the function reported directly to the Chief Executive or Management Board might also help the function improve its status. Having said this, the data showed that overall, top management support for the HRD/Training function was seen as having improved over the past five years (Table 6.19, Figure 6.1). 47.9% of respondents indicated that top management support for the HRD/Training function was '*strong, consistent and active*' 'Now' compared with 11.5% indicating the same for 5 years ago.

Table 6.19: Overall Top Management Support for HRD/Training Function

Type/ Period	Strong, consistent, active (%)	Moderate, intermittent, variable (%)	Weak/ non-existent (%)
Now	47.9	45.9	4.3
5 Years Ago	11.5	51.5	24.6

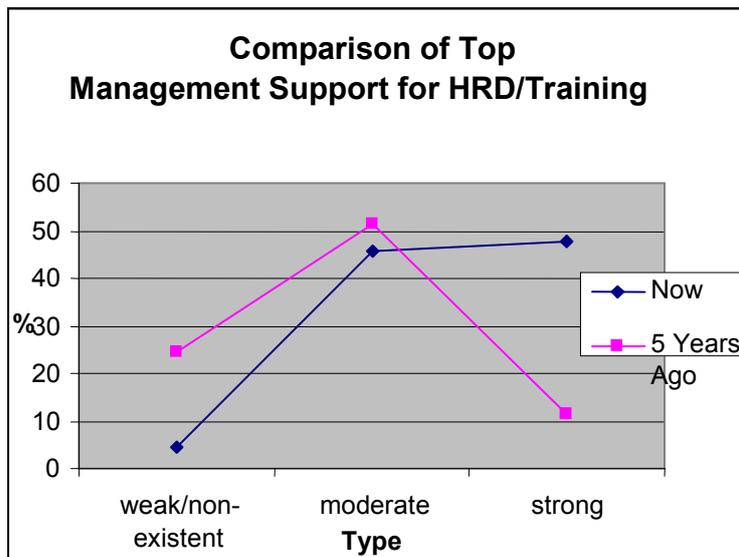


Figure 6.1: Top Management Support for HRD/Training Function Now & 5 Years Ago

Further, a chi-squared contingency table test the data in Table 6.20 (result $p= 0.025$, $0.025 < 0.05$) suggested there was evidence at the 5% significance level to indicate an association between the reported strength of top management support for the HRD/Training function now and the responses of HRD/Training specialists and managers, however the evidence is weak. The figures showed that for Now, HRD/Training practitioners (nearly half of respondents in this category) rated the top management support for the function, *strong consistent and active*, higher than managers (42%), illustrated in Figure 6.2. This could suggest that those in the function are better placed to judge the level and quality support they receive from top management. It could also suggest that managers, who might have more exposure to communications from and with top management, are better placed to judge the level and quality of top management support for the function.

Table 6.20: Top Management Support Now & Respondents' Job Title

			top management support for function now				Total
			NR	strong, consistent & active	moderate, intermittent & variable	weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	0	53	50	5	108
		% within Job title	.0%	49.1%	46.3%	4.6%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	53	45	4	102
		% within Job title	.0%	52.0%	44.1%	3.9%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	6	40	45	4	95
		% within Job title	6.3%	42.1%	47.4%	4.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	146	140	13	305
		% within Job title	2.0%	47.9%	45.9%	4.3%	100.0%

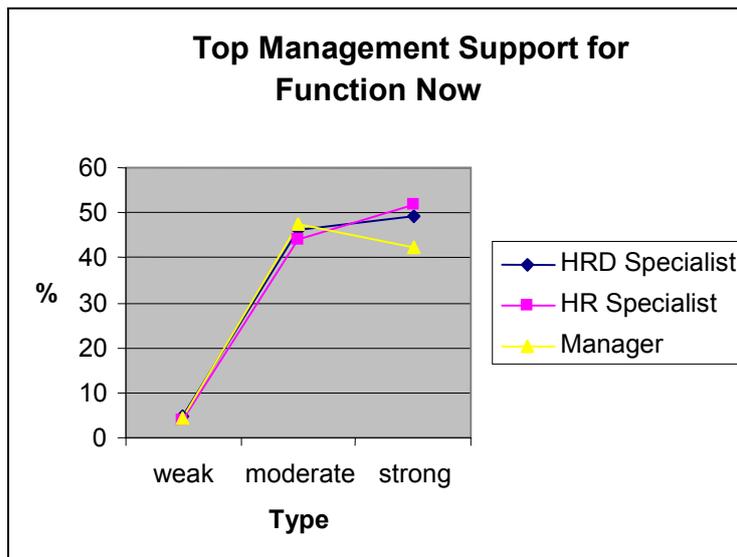


Figure 6.2: Top Management Support Now & Respondents' Job Title cross-tabulated

On the issue of HRD/Training's reporting line, data from elsewhere in the survey showed that more than half the respondents indicated the Heads of the HRD/Training function reported to the Head of Human Resources/Personnel and much fewer reported to a Chief

Executive or Management Board. This suggests that in many of the respondents' organisations, the HRD/Training function continue to be treated as a sub-unit of the HR/Personnel function. This might have been a factor contributing to HRD/Training practitioners' perception that the status of their function would improve if it had a direct reporting line, and thereby more visibility, to the Chief Executive or Management Board. This is consistent with the view of some HRD/Training practitioners who took part in the focus groups discussions that the HRD/Training function tends to be over-shadowed by HR/Personnel, less visible in its own right, and consequently its value is not sufficiently recognised by senior management.

11. Partnership between HRD/Training and Managers

The results of the survey show that stronger partnership between HRD/T and managers was another factor cited as important to the function improving its status (see table 6.21). According to the data, while the quality of the relationship between respondents reported the function and managers was seen as having improved over time –a higher percentage of respondents reported the partnerships as being 'strong, consistent and active' at the time of the survey - 'Now' - (35.1%) compared with 5 years ago (7.9%) – however, overall, most of the respondents still characterised this relationship as 'loosely structured and variable'.

Table 6.21: Types of Partnership between HRD/Training Function & Managers

Partnership between HRD Function & Managers				
	NR	strong, consistent & active partnership	loosely structured and variable partnership	a weak/no working partnership
		%	%	%
partnership between function and managers now	1.0%	35.1%	59.7%	4.3%
partnership between function and managers 5 years ago	11.5%	7.9%	48.9%	31.8%

Further, the result of chi-squared contingency table tests carried out on the data in Table 6.22 suggest that although there was no significant association between the overall responses of HRD/Training practitioners and managers based on their role ($p = 0.42, 0.42 > 0.05$), analysis of the figures for shows HRD/Training practitioners rated the partnership between the function and managers now as *loosely structured and variable*, higher than managers.

Table 6.22: Partnership Now between Function & Managers Cross-tabulated with Respondents' Role

Job title * partnership between function and managers now Crosstabulation							
			partnership between function and managers now				Total
			NR	strong, consistent & active partnership	loosely structured and variable partnership	a weak/no working partnership	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	0	33	72	3	108
		% within Job title	.0%	30.6%	66.7%	2.8%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	45	54	3	102
		% within Job title	.0%	44.1%	52.9%	2.9%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	3	29	56	7	95
		% within Job title	3.2%	30.5%	58.9%	7.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	107	182	13	305
		% within Job title	1.0%	35.1%	59.7%	4.3%	100.0%

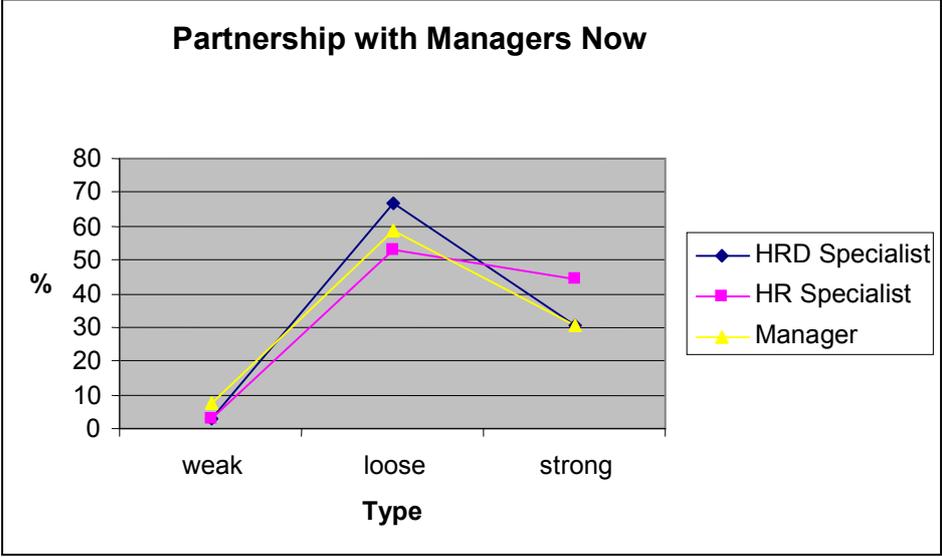


Figure 6.3: Partnership between Function & Managers Now cross-tabulated with Role

12. Stakeholders' Perceptions of HRD/Training Function

The response to the question about how stakeholders see the role of the function is interesting. 41% of respondents (and slightly more than half the managers and just over a quarter of the HRD/Training specialists) reported that the role of the function is still seen as largely '*administrative*', with only 13.8% of respondents indicating that the function's role was now seen as '*a strategic, organisation development expert*' (Table 6.23, Figures 6.4 and 6.5). This finding is interesting in the context of the literature advocating the need for HR, and HRD/Training as a sub-set of HR, to shift its role to more a more strategic one of a change and organisation development expert (Hamlin, 2002).

Table 6.23: Overall Stakeholder Perceptions of HRD/Training Function's Role

Type/ Period	Strategic Organisation Development Expert %	HRD/Training Delivery Expert %	HRD/Training Administrator %
Now	13.8	42.6	41.0
5 Years Ago	2.6	26.9	53.8

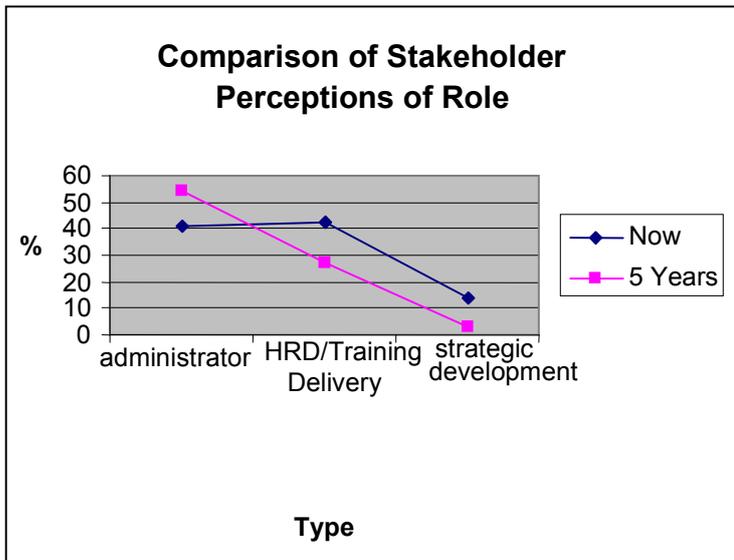


Figure 6.4: Comparison of Stakeholder Perceptions of HRD/Training's Role

The data in Table 6.24 was subjected to a chi-squared analysis and the result ($p=3.33E-05$, $3.33E-05 > 0.05$) suggests that there was a strong association between the responses of the HRD/Training practitioners and managers for stakeholders perceptions of HRD/Training role now. For example, according to the data, more managers (54.8%) than HRD/Training practitioners (27%) said stakeholders viewed the role of HRD/Training now primarily an *administrator of training events*.

Table 6.24: Stakeholder Perceptions of HRD/Training Role Now cross-tabulated with Respondents' Job Title

Job title		stakeholder perceptions of function's role now				Total
		NR	HRD/training delivery expert	administrator of HRD/training events	strategic, organisation development expert	
HRD Specialist	Count	1	61	29	17	108
	% within Job title	.9%	56.5%	26.9%	15.7%	100.0%
HR Specialist	Count	2	43	44	13	102
	% within Job title	2.0%	42.2%	43.1%	12.7%	100.0%
Manager	Count	5	26	52	12	95
	% within Job title	5.3%	27.4%	54.7%	12.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	8	130	125	42	305
	% within Job title	2.6%	42.6%	41.0%	13.8%	100.0%

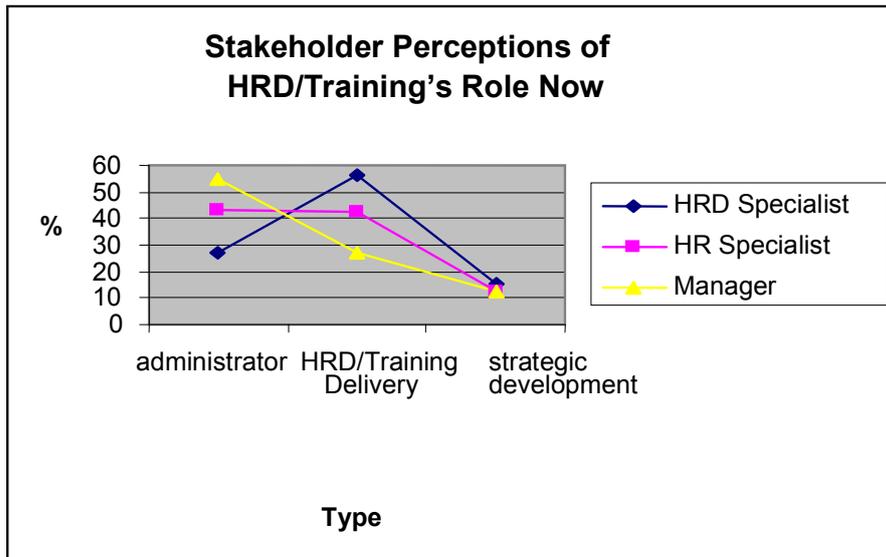


Figure 6.5: Stakeholder Perceptions of HRD/Training Role Now

Moving on, respondents were given an opportunity to identify additional factors that might help improve the status of the HRD/Training function. This elicited 27 responses (see Table 6.25 for specific examples). Broadly, these can be put into one of the following three categories: more resources (e.g. financial and administrative), better integration with the business strategy, professional competence and visible results.

Table 6.25: Improving HRD/Training's Status - Additional Comments

Category	Examples of Comments
More Resources	"Increasing recognition of role and appropriate resources" "More money and more courses (it's being cut)" "A larger budget"
Better Integration with Business Strategy	"Demonstrating knowledge of the business" "Demonstrating role of HRD/Training in supporting corporate strategy" "More business like and awareness of operational pressures. Better strategic and long-term planning"
Competence & Results	"Evidence of delivery of what services actually need". "Excel at delivery" "Need to 'toughen up'! Don't seem to focused professionals with accountability for delivering stretching goals". "Proven results and reputation"

These comments add to the building of an understanding of the challenges facing the HRD/Training function in terms of improving its organisational status. For example, it is interesting to note the emphasis given to the need for the function to demonstrate a more business-like approach and for those in the function to “toughen up” professionally.

Additionally, the response to this part of the questionnaire illustrates the value of open questions in survey design. In hindsight, it would have been useful to have included other, more open questions in the survey. However, the survey design was influenced by intention of gathering comparative, quantitative data about the state of HRD/Training, as

well as trying to limit the length of questionnaire. Feedback had suggested that respondents felt over-whelmed to the number of questions in the pilot questionnaire and this resulted in some of the original questions being cut out. However, it is recognised that there could have been more of a balance between the types of questions included in the questionnaire. One of the aims of this study was to explore the extent to which the HRD/Training function was perceived to be strategic, and so the next section moves onto a discussion of the aspects of the survey that offer some insights into this issue.

13. HRD/Training as Strategic

Perceptions of the HRD/Training function as strategic was another theme explored in this study. It has been frequently argued in the practitioner oriented literature that HRD/Training can improve its organisational status by operating strategically and by demonstrating its strategic value. This aspect was explored in different parts of the survey. For example, respondents were asked:

1. "Has the role of the HRD/Training function become more strategic over the past five years?"
2. "If it has become more strategic, has this change strengthened the status of the HRD/Training Function within your organisation?"

Before commenting on the results, in hindsight, it is clear that these questions are limited in value because the terms 'strategic' and 'status' were not defined in the questionnaire and therefore were open to interpretation in terms of meaning. Erroneously, it had been assumed that given the wide use of these terms within public sector organisation, there

was common understanding of the terms. It would have been to have included a brief definition of the term ‘strategic’ so that there would have greater clarity about what respondents were being asked to consider in this question. Further, before asking respondent to consider the extent to which HRD/Training had become more strategic over the past 5 years, it would have been helpful to have added a question about the extent to which they saw the function as being strategic now. To this extent, the responses to these questions have to be treated with caution; respondents’ responses are likely to have been informed by their differing interpretations of the term strategic. As the post-survey discussions show, opinion was divided on whether or not the function, as it was now, was strategic, and different participants identified a range of ways in which they thought the HRD/Training function was strategic. Accepting these limitations, it is interesting to note that respondents gave a more positive response to the first question than the second (Table 6.26). 62.3% indicated that they believed the function had become significantly or greatly more strategic over the past five years while only 40% indicated that this had improved its status significantly or greatly.

Table 6.26: Comparison of Responses to 'Strategic' & 'Status' Questions

Response	Has role become more strategic?	Has this change strengthened status of function?
	%	%
Don't know	8.2	10.2
Not at all	1.3	4.6
A little	7.2	11.5
Moderately	21.0	27.9
Significantly	40.3	31.5
Greatly	22.0	8.5
Non-response	0	5.9

The data in Table 6.27 and in Table 6.28 was subjected to a chi-squared contingency table test, at the 5% significance level to determine if there was a statistically significant association between the responses to the two questions and respondents' role. The result ($p=4.16E-05$, $4.16E-05 < 0.05$) suggests there was a statistically significant association between the responses of these two groups to the question "Has the role of the HRD/Training function become more strategic over the past five years?"

Table 6.27: Responses to 'Strategic' Question Cross-tabulated with Job Title

			has role of HRD/training become 'more strategic' over past 5 years?					Total	
			don't know	not at all	a little	a moderate amount	a significant amount		a great amount
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	3	0	4	26	51	24	108
		% within Job title	2.8%	.0%	3.7%	24.1%	47.2%	22.2%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	5	2	3	22	44	26	102
		% within Job title	4.9%	2.0%	2.9%	21.6%	43.1%	25.5%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	17	2	15	16	28	17	95
		% within Job title	17.9%	2.1%	15.8%	16.8%	29.5%	17.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	25	4	22	64	123	67	305	
	% within Job title	8.2%	1.3%	7.2%	21.0%	40.3%	22.0%	100.0%	

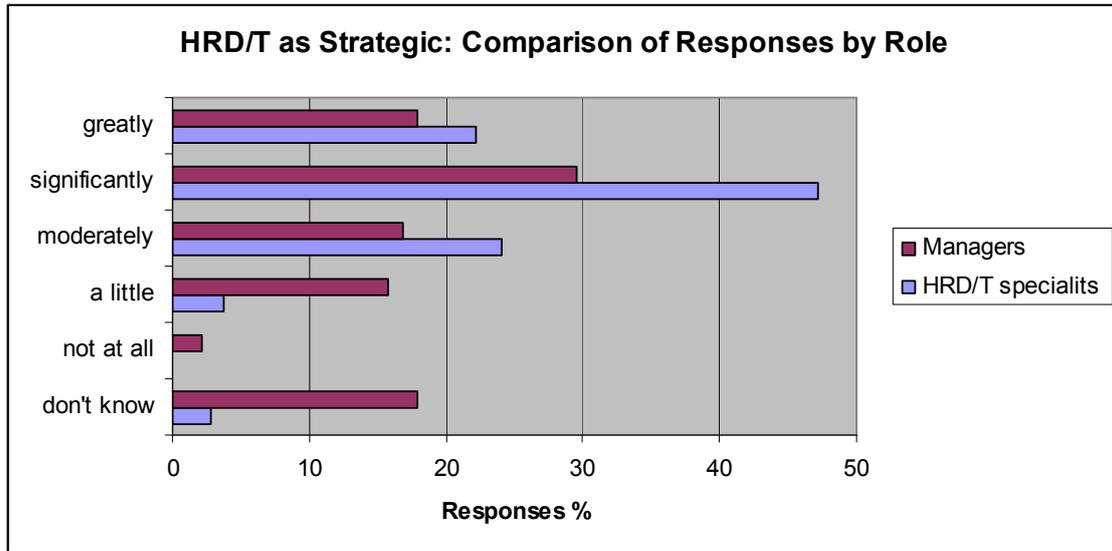


Figure 6.6: HRD/Training as Strategic & Respondents' Role

Similarly, the result ($p = 3.36E-05$, $3.36E-05 < 0.05$) of a chi-squared contingency table test at the 5% significance level suggests there was a statistically significant association between the responses of HRD/Training specialists and managers to the question about the status of the HRD/Training function.

Table 6.28 Responses to 'Status' Question Cross-tabulated with Job Title

		Job title * has this change strengthened the status of function? Crosstabulation							Total	
		has this change strengthened the status of function?								
		don't know	not at all	a little	a moderate amount	a significant amount	a great amount	NR		
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	4	2	12	40	41	5	4	108
	% within Job title		3.7%	1.9%	11.1%	37.0%	38.0%	4.6%	3.7%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	7	2	13	22	36	14	8	102
	% within Job title		6.9%	2.0%	12.7%	21.6%	35.3%	13.7%	7.8%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	20	10	10	23	19	7	6	95
	% within Job title		21.1%	10.5%	10.5%	24.2%	20.0%	7.4%	6.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		31	14	35	85	96	26	18	305
	% within Job title		10.2%	4.6%	11.5%	27.9%	31.5%	8.5%	5.9%	100.0%

The responses of HRD/Training specialists and managers were singled out for comparison because it had been assumed that if there was going to be any difference in perceptions of the strategicness and status of the HRD/Training function it would be more marked between these two groups. This assumption was, to some extent, confirmed by the data analysis. Overall, while there was some similarity between the responses of all three groups of respondents, examination of the data suggested that managers were be less positive than the other two categories of respondents in their perceptions about the extent to which the HRD/Training function had become strategic and the extent to which this had strengthened its status.

Having considered the responses to perceptions of the status of the HRD/Training function, the next section deals with respondents' reported perceptions of the main changes affecting the role of HRD/Training. Examining the main ways in which the role of the HRD/T function had changed was another aim of this study.

14. Perception of Changes in HRD/Training Role

14.1 Overview

By way of a reminder of the type of questions used in this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify one of three options that best described their HRD/Training function at the present time ('Now') and 5 years ago to determine which aspects of the function were perceived as having changed and to determine if it was perceived as having become more strategic. Before presenting the findings, again, it was recognised that these questions were limited in value because 1) they could only elicit responses based on subjective perceptions of HRD/Training, 2) it would unrealistic to

expect many respondents to accurately recall what happened five years ago, and 3) some might not have been in the same role or same organisation five years earlier. Accepting these constraints, the results showed that, overall, the HRD/Training function was seen as having changed in terms of certain aspects of its role, as illustrated in the following section.

14.2 The HRD/Training Function & Corporate Strategy

Considering the emphasis given in the literature to the importance of HRD/Training being aligned to business strategy, it is interesting to note that the results showed that the HRD/Training function was seen to have become better integrated with and more responsive to corporate strategy (Table 6.29, Figure 6.7). It is also interesting to note that, given the emphasis McCracken and Wallace (2000b) placed on HRD/Training helping shape corporate strategy that 30% of respondents indicated that the function did 'helps shape and supports corporate strategy' Now compared with only 3.9% for 5 years ago.

Table 6.29: HRD/Training Function's Relationship with Corporate Strategy

Type/ Period	Shapes & Supports %	Supports %	Works Independently %
Now	30.2	62.6	4.6
5 Years Ago	3.9	47.5	36.4

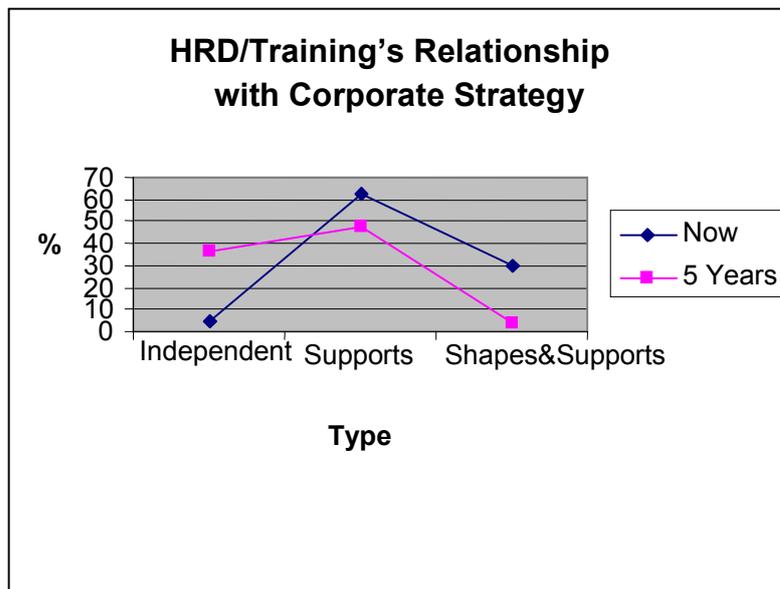


Figure 6.7: *HRD/Training's Relationship with Corporate Strategy*

The result ($p = 0.0095$, $0.0095 < 0.05$) of the chi-squared test of the data in Table 6.30 suggests that there was an association between the reported relationship of the HRD/training function and corporate strategy, and the respondent's job role. For example, more HRD/Training practitioners (32%) than managers (24%) reported that the function now helps support and shape corporate strategy.

Table 6.30: HRD/Training's Relationship with Corporate Strategy Now cross-tabulated with Job Title

		functions's relationship with strategy now				Total	
		NR	helps shape and corporate strategy	supports corporate strategy	works independently of corporate strategy		
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	1	35	71	1	108
		% within Job title	.9%	32.4%	65.7%	.9%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	34	61	6	101
		% within Job title	.0%	33.7%	60.4%	5.9%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	6	23	59	7	95
		% within Job title	6.3%	24.2%	62.1%	7.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	92	191	14	304
		% within Job title	2.3%	30.3%	62.8%	4.6%	100.0%

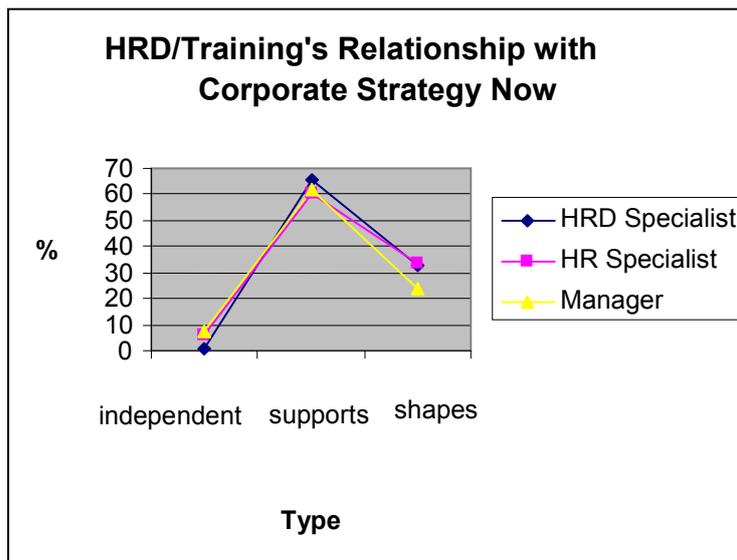


Figure 6.8: HRD/Training's Relationship with Corporate Strategy Now

14.3 HRD/Training goals, policies and plans & corporate strategy

The results suggest that nearly two-thirds of respondents believed that their organisation's HRD/Training goals, policies and plans had become better aligned with corporate strategy over the 5 year period (Table 6.31, Figure 6.9). 61.6% of respondents indicated that the goals, policies and plans were 'strongly aligned with corporate strategy' Now, compared with 10.2% respondents reporting the same for 5 years ago.

Table 6.31: Alignment of HRD/Training's Goals, Policies & Plans with Corporate Strategy

Type/ Period	Strongly aligned %	Loosely aligned %	Weak/non- existent %
Now	61.6	33.8	1.6
5 Years Ago	10.2	48.5	26.6

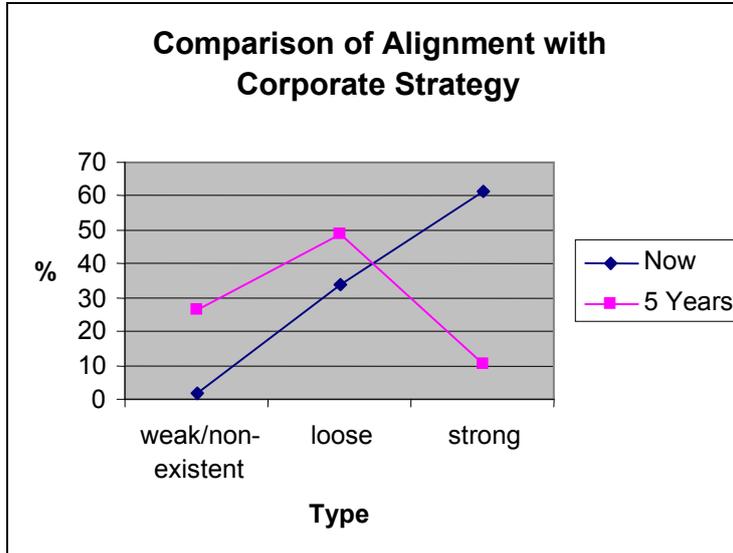


Figure 6.9: Comparison of Alignment of HRD/Training with Corporate Strategy

The result of a chi-squared test of the data in Table 6.32 ($p = 0.014$, $0.014 < 0.05$) suggests that there was an association between the reported alignment of HRD/Training goals, policies and plans with corporate strategies for Now, and the respondents' role. Analysis of the figures for Now shows that HRD/T practitioners rated the function's goals policies and plans alignment with corporate strategy, 'strongly aligned with corporate strategy', significantly higher than managers (as illustrated in Figure 6.10, below).

Table 6.32: Alignment of HRD/Training's Goals, Policies & Plans Now cross-tabulated with Respondents' Job Title

			function's goals, policies and plans alignment with corporate strategy now				Total
			NR	strongly aligned with corporate strategy	loosely aligned with corporate strategy	weakly/not aligned with corporate strategy	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	1	75	32	0	108
		% within Job title	.9%	69.4%	29.6%	.0%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	1	64	35	2	102
		% within Job title	1.0%	62.7%	34.3%	2.0%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	7	49	36	3	95
		% within Job title	7.4%	51.6%	37.9%	3.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	9	188	103	5	305	
	% within Job title	3.0%	61.6%	33.8%	1.6%	100.0%	

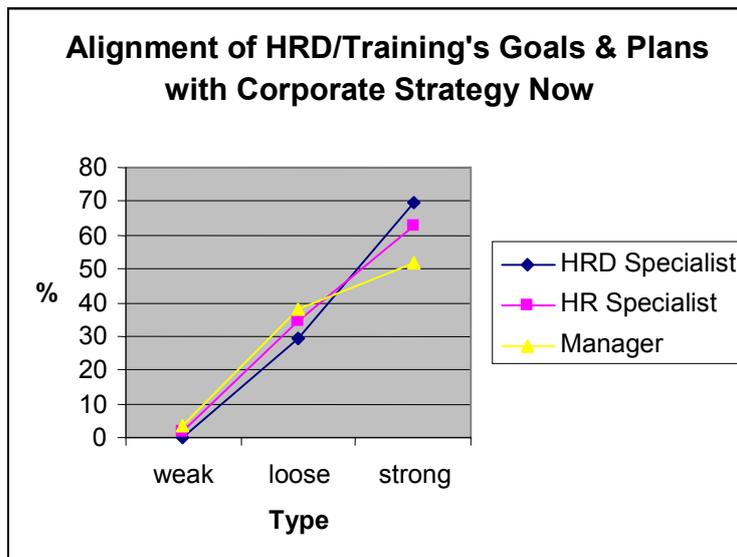


Figure 6.10: Alignment of HRD/Training's Plans with Corporate Strategy Now

14.4 HRD/Training goals, policies and plans

The results showed an overall improvement in perceptions of the quality of HRD/Training goals, policies and plans over the five years period (Table 6.33, Figure 6.11). Most notably, 60% of respondents reported that HRD/Training goals, policies and plans were 'long term, focussed and well-structured' 'Now' compared with only 10.5% of respondents reporting the same for 5 years ago.

Table 6.33: State of HRD/Training Function's Goals, Policies & Plans

Type/ Period	Long term, focused, well-structured %	Short term, loosely structured %	Weak/non- existent %
Now	60.0	34.8	3.0
5 Years Ago	10.5	49.5	26.6

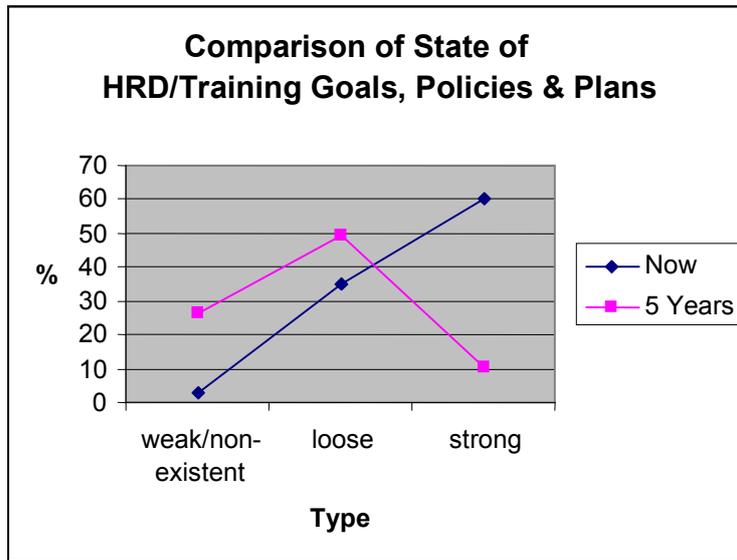


Figure 6.11: State of HRD/Training Function's Goals, Policies & Plans

The result (P-value = 0.035, $0.035 < 0.05$) of a chi-squared analysis of the data in Table 6.34) suggests that there is a relationship between the perceptions of the quality of HRD/Training goals, policies and plans for Now, and the respondent's job role. However, the evidence is weak.

Table 6.34: HRD/Training's Goals, Policies & Plans Now cross-tabulated with Respondents' Job Title

			function's goals, policies and plans now				Total
			NR	long term focused and well-structured	short term and loosely structured	weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	2	74	31	1	108
		% within Job title	1.9%	68.5%	28.7%	.9%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	1	63	36	2	102
		% within Job title	1.0%	61.8%	35.3%	2.0%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	4	46	39	6	95
		% within Job title	4.2%	48.4%	41.1%	6.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	7	183	106	9	305	
	% within Job title	2.3%	60.0%	34.8%	3.0%	100.0%	

The observed values and expected values were inspected and the differences between the two were calculated. Analysis of the figures for Now shows that HRD/T practitioners rated the function's goals, policies and plans, 'long term focused and well structured', significantly higher than managers (as illustrated in Figure 6.12).

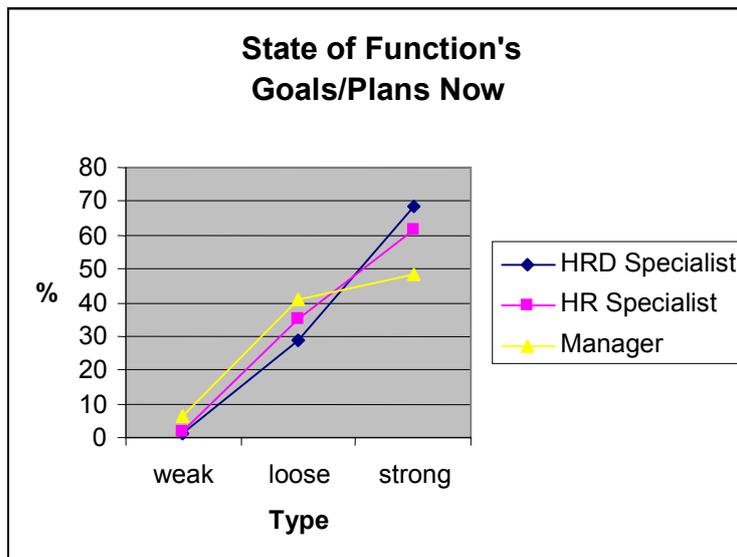


Figure 6.12: State of HRD/Training Function's Goals, Policies & Plans Now

13.4 Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers

The results showed that while feedback between the HRD/Training function and senior managers was seen as having improved over the past 5 years (Table 6.34, Figure 6.13) most respondents indicated that feedback remained 'moderate, variable and loosely structured 'Now' (53.4%) and 5 years ago (45.9%).

Table 6.34: Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers Now & 5 years ago

Type/ Period	Strong, consistent, well- established %	Moderate, variable, loosely structured %	Weak/non- existent %
Now	37.7	53.4	6.6
5 Years Ago	6.9	45.9	33.3

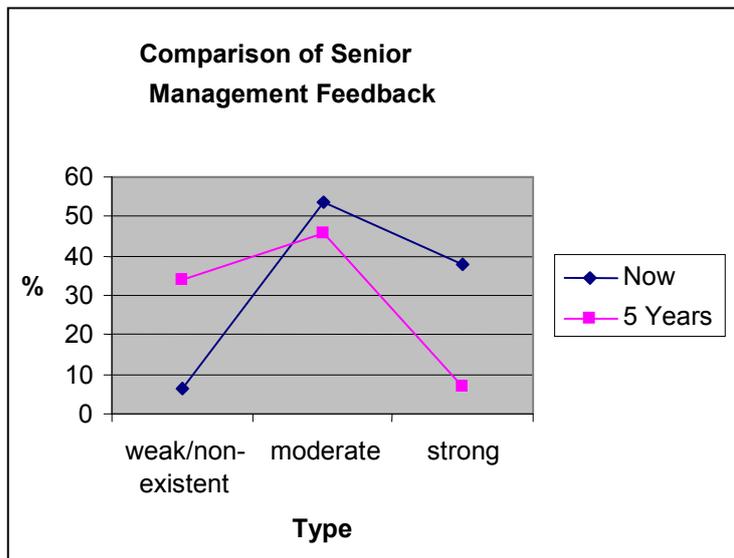


Figure 6.13: Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers

The chi-squared contingency table test was carried out on the data in Table 6.35. to test if there was a relationship between the reported strength of the feedback between HRD/training function and senior managers, and the respondent’s job role, now. Based on the result ($p = 0.00034$, $0.00034 < 0.05$) the null hypothesis “There is no relationship

between the reported strength of the feedback between HRD/training function and senior managers, and the respondent's job role" was rejected. There is evidence at the 5% significance level to suggest that there is a relationship between the reported strength of the feedback between HRD/training function and senior managers, and the respondent's job role. Analysis of the figures shows that for 'Now' HRD/Training practitioners rated the feedback between the function and managers, moderate, variable and loosely structured, significantly higher than managers.

Table 6.35: Senior Managers' Feedback Now & Respondents' Job Title Cross-tabulated

Job title * feedback between function and senior managers now Crosstabulation

			feedback between function and senior managers now				Total
			NR	strong, consistent & well-established	moderate, variable & loosely structured	Weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	0	36	69	3	108
		% within Job title	.0%	33.3%	63.9%	2.8%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	43	52	7	102
		% within Job title	.0%	42.2%	51.0%	6.9%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	7	36	42	10	95
		% within Job title	7.4%	37.9%	44.2%	10.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	7	115	163	20	305	
	% within Job title	2.3%	37.7%	53.4%	6.6%	100.0%	

HRD/Training Function Scans Environment

The results showed that respondents believed that the HRD/Training function had become better at scanning its environment (systematically analysing important emergent changes and developments within their working environment) and is more responsive to opportunities and threats in its working environment (Table 6.36, Figure 6.14). For example, only 6.6% of respondents indicated that the function 'never' scans the environment 'Now' compared with 26.9% reporting the same for 5 years ago.

Table 6.36: HRD/Training Scans Environment for & is Responsive to Opportunities & Threats

Type/ Period	Frequently %	Occasionally %	Never %
Now	38.4	49.5	6.6
5 Years Ago	9.5	46.6	26.9

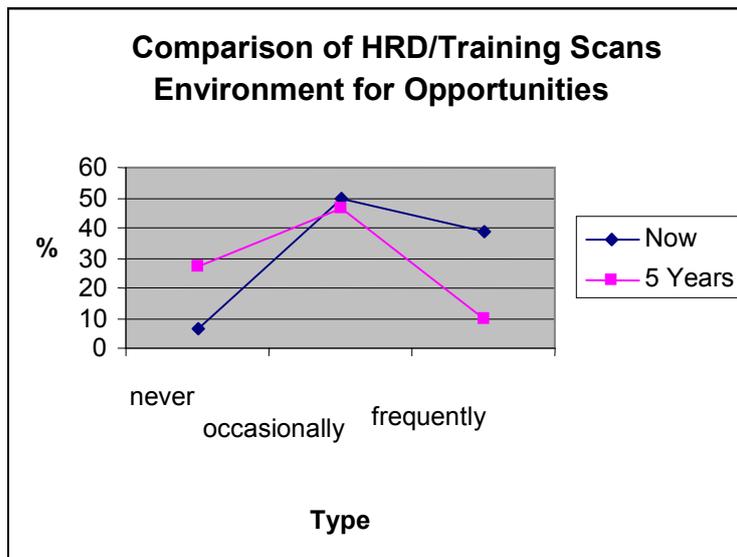


Figure 6.14: Comparison of HRD/Training Scans Environment Now & 5 Years Ago

The result of a chi-squared contingency table test of the data in Table 6.37 ($p = 8.95E-07$, $8.95E-07 < 0.05$) suggests that there was an association between the responses and the respondents' role. For example, analysis of the figures for Now shows that HRD/Training practitioners rated the scans environment, 'frequently', significantly higher than managers (as illustrated in Figure 6.14).

Table 6.37: HRD/Training Scans Environment Now cross-tabulated with Respondents' Job Title

			function scans environment for and is responsive to opportunities and threats now				Total
			NR	frequently	occasionally	never	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	2	52	52	2	108
		% within Job title	1.9%	48.1%	48.1%	1.9%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	38	56	8	102
		% within Job title	.0%	37.3%	54.9%	7.8%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	15	27	43	10	95
		% within Job title	15.8%	28.4%	45.3%	10.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	17	117	151	20	305
		% within Job title	5.6%	38.4%	49.5%	6.6%	100.0%

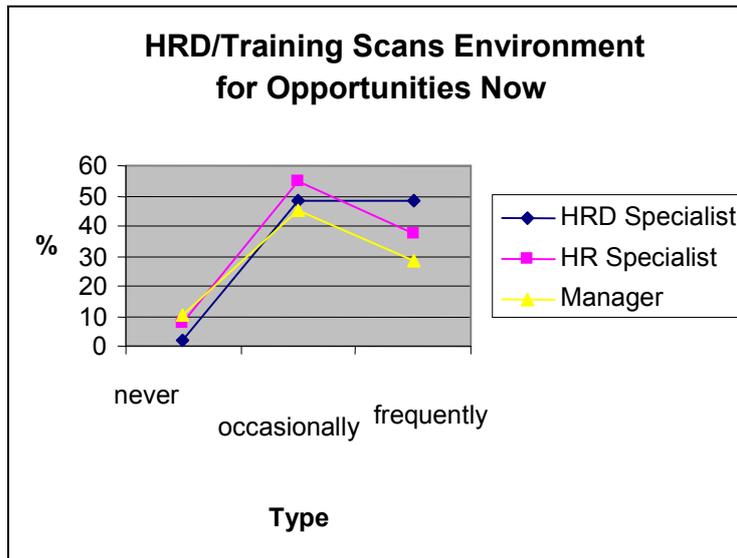


Figure 6.14: HRD/Training Scans Environment for Opportunities Now

13. 5 HRD/Training function undertakes evaluations

It was felt that perceptions of the extent to which HRD/Training undertakes systematic evaluations of its delivery would be worth identifying given they are seen as one way of the function demonstrating its business impact. This was a theme that was picked up in the focus group discussions. In terms of findings, the results showed that respondents believed that most evaluations undertaken by the function were still at the level of individual reactions to development events, with only about a quarter of HRD/Training functions carrying out multi-level evaluations, comprising individual learning, learning transfer and organisational impact assessments (Table 6.38).

Table 6.38: Types of Evaluation Undertaken by HRD/Training Function

Type/ Period	Multi-level assessments %	Individual reactions %	Infrequent/ ad hoc %
Now	26.2	57.0	13.4
5 Years Ago	3.6	49.2	31.8

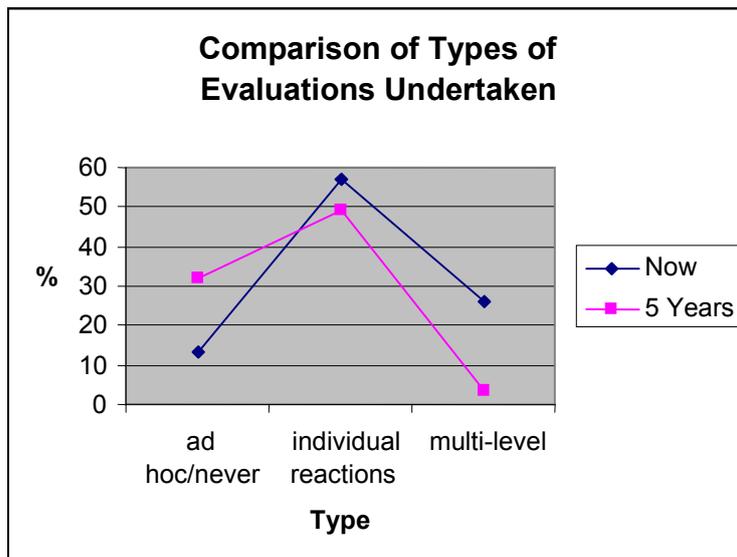


Figure 6.15: Comparison of Types of Evaluation Undertaken by HRD/Training Function

Chi-squared tests of the data for Now (Table 6.39) showed that there was a significant association between the responses and the respondents' role, $p= 0.006$, $0.006 < 0.05$. For example, more HRD/Training specialists (36.1%) than HRD/Personnel specialists (24.5%) and managers (16.8%) reported that the HRD/Training function now undertook multilevel evaluations.

Table 6.39: Types of Evaluations Undertaken by HRD/Training Function Now

			types of evaluation undertaken by function now				Total
			NR	at level of individual reactions to development events	infrequently and ad hoc/never	multilevel	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	2	57	10	39	108
		% within Job title	1.9%	52.8%	9.3%	36.1%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	1	62	14	25	102
		% within Job title	1.0%	60.8%	13.7%	24.5%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	7	55	17	16	95
		% within Job title	7.4%	57.9%	17.9%	16.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	174	41	80	305
		% within Job title	3.3%	57.0%	13.4%	26.2%	100.0%

As illustrated in Figure 6.16, across the three job categories, most of the respondents indicated that the HRD/Training function now undertook evaluations that were at the level of individual reactions to development events rather than at the level of organisational impact.

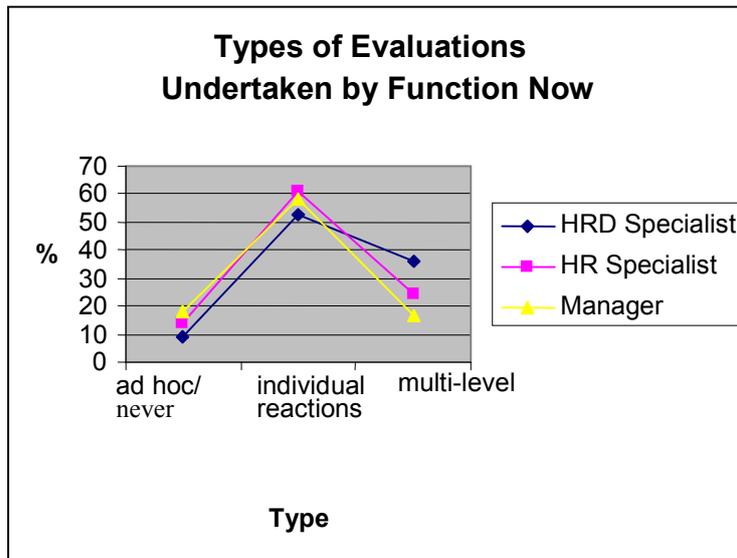


Figure 6.16: *Types of Evaluations Undertaken by HRD/Training Function Now*

15. Summary & Concluding Comments

This chapter presents the main findings of the questionnaire survey aimed at identifying the perceptions of the role of and status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations. The survey elicited 305 responses from a mix of HRD/Training practitioners, HR/Personnel specialists and managers working in public sector organisations. In terms of findings, although respondents saw the role of HRD/Training as having changed over the period given, and improving across a number of dimensions, nevertheless many indicated that stakeholders still perceived the role of the HRD/Training function as primarily as *administrative* and as a *HRD/training deliverer* rather than a *strategic organisation development agent* and the types of evaluations undertaken by the function have tended to remain more at the level of individual reactions to development events as opposed to organisational impact level assessments.

The two dimensions with the largest reported level of change were:

1. the nature of HRD/Training functions goals, policies and plans - 60% of respondents cited that these were long term, focused and well-structured 'Now' compared with 10.5% of respondents citing the same for 5 years ago; and,
2. The degree of alignment between the function's goals, policies and plans and corporate strategy - 61.6% of respondents indicated that the function's goals, policies and plans were strongly aligned with corporate strategy compared with 10.2% of respondents indicating the same for 5 years ago.

In addition, the function was seen as having strengthened its partnership with managers and the HR function, and both feedback between the function and senior managers and top management support for the function were seen as having improved. However, more significantly, according to the data, there were notable differences in the perception of the extent of such change and improvement, with HRD/Training specialists, more so than managers, indicating a positive view of the changes to and within the HRD/Training function.

In addition, the findings offer interesting insights into the perceptions of the organisational and occupational status of HRD/Training. In contrast to the overall relatively positive perceptions of the role of HRD/Training, the reported perceptions of its organisational and occupational status were poor. Further, and surprisingly, these poor status perceptions were generally consistent across the three categories of respondent role. The implications of the survey findings will be discussed in Chapter Six.

In terms of the survey itself, although it did elicit some interesting information, aspects of it would have benefited from being designed differently. For example, more use could have been made of open questions as a means of getting more detail about the how certain factors were affecting the role and status of the HRD/Training function. The one open question in the questionnaire yielded useful insights into the factors that respondents thought would help in improving HRD/Training's status such as *demonstrating knowledge of the business* and *providing evidence of delivery of what services actually needs*. Also, it is also recognised that there are limitations in asking respondents to report on the role and status of HRD/Training five years ago given that it is not certain that respondents were able to accurately recall events from this far back. Despite the concerns about the inclusion of the ranking section, it did elicit some interesting data about the perception of the status of the HRD/Training function. Finally, the next chapter presents the data from the post-survey focus groups and interviews.

Chapter 7

Post-Survey Interviews & Discussion Groups Findings

“...a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing – a focus on object A involves a neglect of object B.”

(Kenneth Burke, cited in Merton, 1987 pp: 551)

1. Introduction

This short chapter presents the findings of the post-survey interviews and group discussions that were conducted as a means of contextualising the findings of the study. By way of a reminder, telephone interviews were carried out with a small sample of survey respondents and some discussion groups were set up to present, explore and test the validity of the study findings. Both the interviews and the group discussions provided additional interesting information about perceptions of HRD/Training and about people's reactions to the study. Specifically, they provided useful feedback about which aspects of the research, especially the survey, worked well and which aspects were problematic.

2. Post-Survey Interviews & Discussion Groups

As indicated in the research methodology chapter, six telephone interviews were carried out with those participating in the survey described in Chapter 6. The purpose of these interviews was to help contextualise and test reaction to survey findings. The interviewees were randomly selected from the list of survey respondents who had indicated they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Of the total of 305

survey respondents, 105 had indicated they would be willing to take part in any follow-up to the survey, of which 62 (that is 63.5% within the sector type) were from local government and 35 (that is 68% within the sector type) were from central government.

Of the six interviewees, two were HRD/Training practitioners, two were HR/Personnel specialists and two were line managers and all from central government. The interviews tended to be short and typically of 15-20 minute duration. In addition, three discussion groups were set up to help contextualise findings of the study. One of these discussion groups were held in London and two were conducted at the National School of Government's site in Sunningdale. All of those attending these events were HRD/Training practitioners or those with an interest in HRD/Training policy. What follows is a short summary of the main issues discussed in both the interviews and the group discussions.

3. The Question of HRD/Training's Role

One of the themes explored in the discussions and interviews was the role of HRD/Training and the extent to which it was seen as being strategic. There was recognition that the HRD/Training function had an important contribution to make to the organisation in terms of building the capability to employees. A few people commented on its role in ensuring that staff skills and knowledge was of an appropriate standard needed to help government departments deliver their policy commitments and services, as illustrated by the comment below:

“Training and development of staff is one of the most important aspect of an establishment for the sake of continuity. ‘Manpower’ fine-tunes a department and ensures that appropriately well-qualified staff are in place to drive forward the aims and objectives of the department.” (Interviewee 3: HR/Personnel specialist indicating HRD/Training as strategic)

Reactions to the finding that, according to the survey, fewer line managers than HRD/Training saw the HRD/Training function as strategic were interesting and mixed. Comments made during the discussion group sessions with HRD/Training practitioners suggested that opinion was divided on the issue of whether or not the HRD/Training function had become strategic, with HRD/Training practitioners expressing a more positive view about HRD/Training’s strategic value than the managers.. This is illustrated by the following statements, starting with a comment from a HRD/Training practitioner stating that they believed the function was strategic:

“[HRD/Training is strategic]...because it builds the capability of the organisation, without which the department would stagnate...training builds skills and knowledge and drives the department forward. But this is not always recognised.” (Civil service HRD/Training practitioner)

A HRD/Training practitioner said they were less certain about whether or not the function was strategic and used the criteria of ‘essential versus non-essential’ to the organisations as a yardstick for thinking about the issue. They concluded that :

“...it’s a matter of what is important and essential...(HRD/Training) is on the border of essential/non-essential...” (Interviewee 1: HRD/Training practitioner identifying HRD/Training as strategic).

Another HRD/Training specialist taking part in the group discussions said they were less certain about their work being strategic because their particular work was about ensuring employees received the necessary training and development support as and when it was needed but they were not necessarily involved in the delivery. In this context, they said they felt that it was more of a support function. This sense of ambiguity about the issue is reflected in their comment:

“HRD/Training revolves around people. Our department survives to serve people. Making sure people are equipped and skilled to ‘serve’ those they are recruited to serve is important. The training is needed to support the functions of the other functions...”
(Civil service HRD/Training practitioner)

By comparison, line managers seemed clearer that although its work was important to the organisation they did not see it as strategic. The following two comments illustrate this:

“...HRD/Training is fairly important, but it’s not the main work of an organisation.”
(Interviewee 6: line manager indicating that HRD/Training was not strategic)

“...it depends how you look at it. It [HRD/Training] is not as strategic as some other areas of work; no, I wouldn’t really say it is strategic.” (Interviewee 5: line manager indicating that HRD/Training was not strategic).

Asked about possible explanations for the difference of opinion on this issue between managers and the HRD/Training practitioners, one discussion group participant said that HRD/Training practitioners were better placed than managers to judge whether or not their work was strategic because they were inside the function. It is interesting to note that, on the theme of change, one of the group discussion participant, an experienced HRD/Training practitioner, made the point that to say whether or not HRD/Training had changed or not really depended on where you looked. He argued that although it might appear that it had not changed significantly in terms of its role as, for example, described in the job advertisements, aspects of it had changed:

“This may be outside the scope of your study, but it may be worth including a caveat saying that the function has not changed significantly in the areas examined but may have changed significantly in other ways, such as the size of the operation, the topics being trained, the methods used...” (HRD/Training practitioner and participant in post-survey discussion session)

Another said discussion group participant, speaking about why there seemed to be a gap between what is written about HRD/Training practice and what those in public sector organisations actually say about it, suggested that it could be that those that typically write about it, especially in practitioner publications, tend to ‘talk-up’ the role and practice of HRD.

“Maybe it’s more that it’s espoused practice which represents the best of what L&D is doing [that is written about] rather than the typical or middle ground.”

4. HRD/Training’s Organisational Status

Interviewees and group discussion participants made some interesting observations about the results of the two ranking exercises in the survey. In terms of organisational status, many of the discussion group participants (all HRD/Training practitioners) spoke positively about their work:

“I would rate training high, probably in first place. It’s about making a difference, helping people.”

“Human capital is the most expensive resource a business has. Therefore it is essential that we are able staff to deliver business objectives. Training helps...”

By contrast, both the managers interviewed had ranked HRD/Training low. They ranked policy work high and one of them suggested that their reason for this because its results were more in the line of vision of others, including senior managers and politicians, than those of HRD/Training:

“...Policy work...it is easy to observe results of its work..” (Interviewee 5: line manager ranking Policy Work 1st and HRD/Training 8th overall).

The same manager commented that the dimension they felt was most important in terms of organisational status was ‘Value to Organisation’:

“The areas I ranked highly are those which I feel are more strategic.” (Interviewee 5: manager ranking Policy work 1st and HRD/Training 8th on Value to Organisation).

The issue of insufficient visibility of the function was picked up by several HRD/Training practitioners taking part in the group discussions:

“We do important work. The problem is that it is usually not recognised as important by some of the decision makers in our organisation – this does affect our status...”

“...the problem is that people still think of us as training officers, junior level clerical assistants. We are much, much more than that but people don’t seem to see that...”

One interviewee equated organisational status with the level of seniority of those in the function: *“Policy was ranked highest. That is because most senior jobs are policy ones...”* (Interviewee 6: line manager ranking Policy Work 1st and HRD/Training 7th overall). The issue of seniority was also picked up by one of the discussion group participants and suggested that perhaps different types of HRD/Training activity had different levels of status:

“Interestingly, the HRD/Training function straddles every level – from how to clean to how to lead. Those responsible for the more strategic or high status training, like leadership development, may be perceived as strategic or high status themselves. Perhaps it is the lower status, higher volume training that is most known and which shapes perceptions.”

Another interviewee emphasised the relationship between the status of HRD/Training and power: “...perhaps this is why they are lowly-regarded – because they do have power, but not over the running of the office...” (Interviewee 3: HR/Practitioner specialist ranking HR/Personnel 1st and HRD/Training 2nd). Participants in the discussion groups confirmed some of these views:

“Policy work carries more influence. Training isn’t seen as being as stretching as policy.” (HRD/Training practitioner)

“Policy work determines the work of the department and helps it to achieve its target. HRD is not seen in the same way...” (HRD/Training practitioner)

However, one interviewee, a human resources specialist, questioned the value attributed to policy work:

“HR/Personnel...[I] ranked high because an organisation succeeds or fails on the calibre of its workforce. Everything flows from that. By contrast, policy is less important to the organisation in and of itself – it’s outward facing and is the result of every other function working well.” (Interviewee 3: HR/Personnel specialist ranking HR/Personnel 1st and HRD/Training 2nd).

The same person raised the issue of the relationship between organisational status and the HR function’s indispensability:

“... it’s an issue of indispensability... the organisation cannot function without paid, satisfied staff, or money etc.” (Interviewee 3: HR/Practitioner specialist ranking HR/Personnel 1st, HRD/Training 2nd and Finance 3rd).

Several participants commented on the comparisons between HRD/Training and other functions such as HR/Personnel, information technology (IT) and policy work. In making the comparisons, people commented on issues such as the relative influence of the area of work and the complexity and impact of the work as factors that influenced their thinking, as illustrated by the quotes below:

“Personnel are important – it should be rated high. Strength lays here. Plays a part in selection as well as working with people. I would probably rate training sixth... it is not as influential... ”

“Personnel involve a lot of paper work, not a very rewarding role. You’re not really responsible for making changes...”

“IT is important – without IT the business will not run. The policy team write the legislation on how the social economy will work and how the government will achieve the goals it has set for the coming year, and so is an important job. Training has less of an impact...”

“IT is important and would rank high because in our department, in terms of new tax credits, we had a big problem because IT didn’t work...”

Some raised the point that people directly benefiting from the services of their function usually had positive impression of their work. Some said that part of the problem was that there was a general perception within the organisation that HRD/Training was not a particularly specialised activity and was the sort of work that “*anyone could step into*” and that it “*...it doesn't require any particular talent or skill...*”.

One discussion group member commented on why some people might report a less favourable impression of HRD/Training, citing the tendency of those on the inside of an organisation to under-value practice in their own organisation, as illustrated by the comment: “*Internal perceptions are often that the grass is greener in another organisation but 'in my organisation it is not so good'.*” (HRD/Training practitioner)

Some discussion group participants said they were aware that the work was seen by some as having low value and that this made them feel helpless and frustrated. Several participants expressed anxiety about HRD/Training's reported low status and mentioned the impact that this can have on practitioners' confidence levels:

“Our work is about building the capability of our organisation; it is just that people don't immediately see the benefits of what we do...it is quite disheartening at times, it can shake your confidence at times...it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy...”

Having considered reactions to the organisational status ranking of the HRD/Training function, the next section presents a selection of responses to the occupational status ranking of HRD/Training. Again, these were issues that emerged during the post-survey telephone interviews and during the group discussions.

5. HRD/Training's Occupational Status

Generally, those taking part in the interviews and group discussions accepted that there was a high level of consistency in the ranking of the various occupations. Explaining the factors that influenced their ranking decision, some said their choice was strongly influenced by their perception of which occupations were most altruistic and high on public value, as illustrated by the comments:

“Doctor, ranked best – it is challenging and about doing good.” (Interviewee 5: line manager ranking Doctor 1st, HRD/Training 6th overall).

“I’ve gone for a profession that presents a challenge but also is a benefit to society as a whole.” (Interviewee 6: line manager ranking Doctor 1st and HRD/Training 7th overall).

“The least rated are monotonous and not challenging, like porter, cleaner and personnel officer... The most rated are to do with working to improve the lives of people, like doctor and nurse, which is essentially my goal in life...” (Interviewee 6: line manager ranking Doctor 1st and HRD/Training 7th).

“I was thinking about those jobs that make most of a difference to people’s lives...” (Interviewee 5: line manager ranking School Teacher 1st and HRD/Training practitioner 6th on Value to Society).

“I wanted to follow medicine as a child. Being able to ‘make a significant difference’ to someone in terms of health, and ultimately their standard of life, is a wonderful gift, skill and ability. I rated accountancy as the worst, because I dislike figures. Training was somewhere in the middle because its scope of influence is limited...” (Interviewee 3: HR/Personnel specialist ranking Doctor 1st and HRD/Training 5th)

Others commented on the specific role and work of the occupations and its levels of reward, including social respect:

“A doctor has an interesting, diverse role and is well-respected within his/her community. An office cleaner is low paid; nothing changes regarding their daily routine.” (Interviewee 2: HRD/Training practitioner ranking Doctor 1st and Cleaner 10th)

“[Cleaners]...they have to work unsocial hours and don’t get paid much.” (Interviewee 5: Manager ranking Cleaner 10th)

“I like the continual learning and importing knowledge idea – that’s why I would rate ‘university lecturer’ in first place...” (Interviewee 1: HRD/Training practitioner ranking University Lecturer 1st and HRD/Training 3rd)

Another group discussion participant emphasised the importance of specialist knowledge as status factor:

“One might argue that most of the comparable professionals require a strong basis of knowledge and experience in professional practice. For those in HRD/Training, the key attribute for success is skill – personal, presentational, facilitational...In that sense, a good comparator would be the acting profession.”

Finally, despite the reservations expressed about the appropriateness of asking people to rank their perceptions of other functions and occupations, the discussion groups generally accepted the status rankings of HRD/Training as an accurate reflection of its position. A few participants then pointed out that they were:

“...disappointed but not too surprised by the ranking.”

Some said they did not feel too engaged with the discussion about the status of HRD/Training because it was not something that was generally on their ‘radar’ and because it was beyond their control and not within their power to change. Some of the participants had resigned themselves to the fact that their work had a poor image and was seen as being of comparatively low value:

“...it doesn’t make you feel too good but I guess that is how it is.”

“I guess that is just how it is...I suppose as long as we know that we do a good job, then that is the important thing...there is not much point struggling against an immovable barrier.”

6. General Responses to Study

In terms of their general reactions to the questionnaire survey, some said they struggled with the organisational and occupational ranking exercise *“...because it is not nice having to ‘grade’ people; all types of work have some value...”* (Interviewee: HR/Personnel specialist). This was a theme picked up by some of the HRD/Training practitioners during the group discussions. Some said they would not feel comfortable with the ranking exercise while others said it was an interesting way of finding out how they were seen by others in the organisation.

It was interesting to note that a couple of participants said they found it more comfortable ranking the occupations rather than the internal organisation functions. One participant explained that this could be because they generally know people working in the various organisational functions and this personalises the ranking. That is, they felt some anxiety about ranking organisational functions because they would be, indirectly, ranking their colleagues. Also, a few of the HRD/Training practitioners said they never or rarely “...stopped to think about our status in the organisation...” and as such felt it was a worthwhile exercise

Although the most of the time during these sessions was spent discussing the organisational and occupational ranking of HRD/Training, participants did comment on a few other issues worth noting. Some of the interviewees said they found it hard to answer the questions about the state of the HRD/Training function five years ago. Also, many of the HRD/Training practitioner expressed surprise by the number of job titles documented during the job advertisements analysis and some felt that how they were labelled did need to be considered further. Several agreed that having such a wide range of job titles did create a sense of confusion and lack of understanding about their role.

7. Summary & Concluding Comments

This chapter presents the main points arising from the post-survey interviews and discussion groups. The interviews and discussion groups were an important component of the research process. As this chapter shows, they served to contextualise the results of the study and helped with the interpretation of the findings. However, the data has to be

treated with some caution and certainly not be treated as representative of all public sector HRD/Training functions given that all the interviewees and post-survey group discussions were from central government.

Generally, those taking part in the interviews and groups discussion were quite open about sharing their responses to the findings of the study. While all the HRD/Training practitioners taking part in the interviews and group discussions spoke positively about their work (especially in terms of its contribution to building individual capability), several recognised the value of their work was not always visible or appreciated within the organisation. It is worth highlighting the point about self-fulfilling prophecy made by one HRD/Training practitioner - a number of HRD/Training practitioners taking part in the group discussion said the status ratings resonated with their experience and that this did affect their level of confidence, which in turn, may affect how they present themselves to others within and outside the organisation. It is also interesting to note that some indicated that they rarely stopped to think about the status of their HRD/Training function. Further, this chapter illustrates that despite the concerns of some about the appropriateness of asking people to rank organisational functions and occupational groups, those interviewed following the survey reported that the two ranking exercises were interesting and thought-provoking.

Had time and resources allowed, it would have been useful to have carried out more and a wider range of interviews and group discussions about the findings of this study. It would have, for example, been particularly interesting to have discussed the findings with individual and groups of senior managers and decision-makers including, given that this study was particularly concerned with HRD/Training in the public sector, political leaders who set government policy.

Chapter 8

Discussion of Findings and Emerging Themes

“Each person standing at one part of the elephant can make his own limited, analytical assessment of the situation, but we do not obtain an elephant by adding ‘scaly’, ‘long and soft’, ‘massive and cylindrical’ together in any conceivable proportion. Without the development of an over-all perspective, we remain lost in our individual investigations. Such a perspective is a province of another mode of knowledge, and cannot be achieved in the same way that individual parts are explored.” (Ornstein 1972 p. 10, cited in Mintzberg et al 1998 p.350).

1. Introduction

This chapter is about sense-making. Here, the intention is to bring together the most relevant insights gained from the literature and the empirical research, with the intention of deriving an informed understanding of the role and status of the HRD/Training function in UK organizations that accurately reflects both.

This study generated a large amount of empirical data and it is not practical to deal with all the issues arising from the findings within the confines of this chapter. Instead, it discusses a select number of themes and issues of most relevant to the original research objectives. Specifically, the chapter will discuss the findings that provide useful insights into the role of the HRD/Training function, the ways in which it has been changing, and perceptions of its current status.

In the literature, the issue of HRD/Training's status has increasingly formed part of the discourse around its changing role and future prospects, which suggests there is a connection between the role of HRD/Training and its status as an organisational function (Keep, 1989; 2005; Buckley & Caple 1995; Reid & Barrington 1994; Hamlin 2002) and its status as professional occupation (Gold et al. 2002, 2003). What it is not possible to say whether, and to what extent, its role is a condition of its status, or in reverse, its status is a condition of its role. Part of what this study suggests is that those in the HRD/Training function face a status dual challenge: that of positioning it internally as a business critical function, and of being seen as such. That is, even if those in the function believe it is already a strategic actor, then there is a need to search for an explanation as to why others like managers, as this research shows, do not necessarily share this belief. The following sections explore this issue more fully beginning with a brief discussion of the issue of HRD/Training's organisational status.

2. The Organisational Status Void

It is clear both from some of the literature (Reid and Barrington 1994; Senker 1992; Hamlin 2002; Keep 1995; 2005) and from the findings of this study that HRD/Training's status is problematic. For example, in this study, survey respondents ranked the overall status of HRD/Training function 8th out a list of 10 functions and 7th on the Value to the Organisation dimension suggesting respondents viewed HRD/Training as having comparatively limited organisational value. Now, this could simply be treated as aberration. Alternatively, the ranking could be an indicator of something more fundamental such as others in the organisation simply not seeing or knowing how it impact on the business and those within it. For example, almost implicit in statements

such as “*Policy work determines the work of the department and helps it to achieve its target. HRD is not seen in the same way...*” (Civil service HRD/Training practitioner) is that the anticipated and perceived impact of policy work is invariably greater than that of HRD.

Undeniably, organisational status is determined by a complex interplay of factors, and of course, such statements are perception based. Accepting this, it is worth commenting on the role specific factors play in informing perceptions of the status of HRD/Training. Demonstrating organisational value, a significant theme within the HRD/Training literature (Burrow & Berardinelli 2003; Becker & Huselid 2003; Bibby 2004), is clearly an important objective if HRD/Training is to succeed in improving its position. In this respect, HRD/Training’s capacity is limited because, firstly, proving a return-on-investment remains problematic for HRD/Training. Demonstrating impact requires some sort of evaluation and as the Government Skills 2007 suggests government departments will engage with impact evaluations if there is not an added cost to them (Government Skills, 2007).

Further, according to the survey data, only a quarter of respondents said their HRD/Training function conducted multi-level evaluations, that is those that do more than simply record learners general impressions of their learning experience in the form of post-course feedback forms. Hussey (1985), in a study of 80 UK companies, reported that only 33% of the respondents felt that there was a direct link between training and the achievement of corporate objectives and very few of these organisations assessed the full cost or impact of training activities and as such were unable to evaluate its organisational benefits.

On another aspect of HRD/Training's status, there is a strong tradition of organisational studies highlighting a correlation between status and power (French and Raven 1958; Crozier 1964; Pfeffer 1981) and, significantly, the research data suggests that HRD/Training is seen as having comparatively little organisational power and influence. Survey respondents ranked it 8th on the 'Power and Influence' dimension, akin to that of the weakly positioned research and development subunit of Perrow's study (Perrow 1970). It is suggested that HRD/Training, like Perrow's research and development unit, is structurally marginalised because it has not been explicitly seen as contributing to the business bottom-line.

Unlike the HRD/Training function, the Finance function, for example, is seen as having higher control over limited resources and low substitutability (Gibbons et al ,1991; Kanter, 1979; Pfeffer, 1981). Further, unlike the HRD/Training function, Finance is seen as having specialist expertise and a certain type of 'strategically contingent' control (Crozier 1964; Hickson et al 1971; Hinnings et al 1974). Crozier (1964) studied the relationship between workers in the production and maintenance functions of French tobacco processing plants and found evidence of power differences between the different functions. Crozier suggested that the maintenance workers controlled a strategically contingent factor in the production process – repairs to the machine – which gave them significant power. To the extent that the Finance section controls budgets and important financial resources, its span of influence is much greater and its power base greater than that of the HRD/Training function.

Additionally, it is suggested that the degree of risk embedded within the work of certain organisational functions is also an influential factor in determining their structural status. Unlike HRD/Training, Finance, for example, is a high risk function where errors can have serious organisational consequences. Consequently, the Finance function is more likely to be treated as 'indispensable' and attributed a higher level strategic significance and value; this confers on it a certain cache denied the HRD/Training function.

Generally, HRD/Training is seen as being a low priority area compared with other organisational operations, with a vulnerable resource base over which it has limited control. Writing about human resource development functions, Grugulis states:

“For organisations that choose to compete on cost, they are an unjustifiable extravagance – and large sections of the British economy still compete on cost.”
(Grugulis 2007 pp:5).

Another status indicator related to organisational power and influence is 'Career Advancement Potential'. HRD/Training was ranked 9th on this dimension, suggesting that it is perceived as offering limited opportunities for advancement. Interestingly, the perceptions of graduate 'high-fliers' can be a useful indicator of the wider perceptions of the status of an organisational function. Buckley and Caple (1995) have argued that 'high fliers' tend to be reluctant to spend any length of time in the training function, fearing that it might jeopardise their future career prospects. This perspective is supported by the focus group data from this study that indicated civil service high-fliers (fast-track managers) saw working in the HRD/Training function, unlike the Finance function, as a 'dead-end', career-limiting move.

Finally, in this section, we return to the basic issue of the business centrality of the function. Getting to the underlying message of another quote, this time from a HRD/Training practitioner, that is, the basic question ‘*would the business survive without it?*’:

“IT is important – without IT the business will not run. The policy team writes the legislation on how the social economy will work and how the government will achieve the goals it has set for the coming year, and so is an important job. Training has less of an impact...” (HRD/Training practitioner).

In answer to the question ‘*would the business survive without it?*’, some of the comments from the focus groups and interviews would suggest, that unlike the case of policy or I.T., they are simply not sure. Certainly, in government organisations, policy work, by virtue of it being driven by political leaders be it Ministers or elected members has a high level of visibility and support, and those in policy roles tend to be very aware of the risks and potential consequences of failure.

Moving on, understanding the elements that underpin HRD/Training’s weak organisational status only takes us so far. Identifying the potential measures for addressing this problem is also a preoccupation of the practitioner literature (Sloman, 2006; CIPD, 2003) as well as some academic literature (Gold et al 2002; 2003). In this respect, the literature suggests that in order for the function to improve its status it must establish itself as a strategic operation (CIPD 2003; IRS 1998). The following section considers this more fully.

3. Strategic HRD/Training: exposing the faulty wiring

3.1 Overview

The strategicness of the HRD/Training role has been a recurrent theme in human resources literature over the past 15 years or so (Garavan et al 1995; Horowitz 1999; Vere 2005; Costine & Heraty 1995). Within the literature, this theme has been represented in many different ways. For example, it is reported the role is now more strategic because the HRD/Training function is no longer simply 'immersed in routine training programmes'. HRD/Training is now more strategic because it is taking on a sharper business focus, being better integrated with organisational goals and priorities, and establishing productive relationships with manager. It is more strategically positioned as an agent for change and organisation development (Harrison, 1997; Horowitz 1999; Garavan et al 1995; Burrow & Berardinelli 2003; McCracken and Wallace 2000).

However, the findings of this research raise some questions about the extent to which HRD/Training can claim strategic status. To illustrate, the analysis of HRD/Training job showed that the HRD/Training role continues to be represented in primarily operational terms - its core role is still seen as operational delivery rather than strategic terms - 42.6% of respondents described the role as a deliverer of HRD/Training and 41% described it as an administrator of HRD/Training events, while only 13.8% described it as playing a strategic, organisation development role. As one HRD/Training practitioner interviewed during the study said: "*...we administer providers.*" Another said: "*We're just told to deliver – there's not any input from us at the strategy level.*"

These findings are consistent with those of Sambrook in her analysis of 200 National Health Service human resources jobs advertised in the *People Management* journal over a 12 month period from August 1996 to July 1997 (Sambrook 1998). Further, the general thrust of these findings supports Nijhof's conclusions about the role of Dutch HRD/Training practitioners (Nijhof 2005) and confirms Gane's argument of over 30 years ago that HRD/Training function was facing a significant struggle in terms of shifting perceptions of it as merely a provider of training courses (Gane, 1972). As one line manager interviewed during this study said: "*It's [HRD/Training] about general development...and courses.*"

Further evidence of the HRD/Training role continuing to be more operational rather than strategic emerges from other aspects of the job advertisements analyses. For example, 'Training' emerged as the most frequently mentioned task overall and was the most frequently specified task for both 1996-1997 (72.1%) and 2003-2004 (57.3%). In terms of seniority, using the designations as one indicator of the seniority of a post, of the 30 designations listed in the advertisements, slightly more than one third (n.270, 36%) were identified as being Manager level, and an additional 23% were identified as Consultant, Adviser, and Head suggesting that possibly around half the posts overall were presented as manager level posts. Even in the best case scenario, even if the other half of the posts were at a non-managerial level – and incidentally, only 27% were explicitly identified as 'Trainer' and 'Officer' level post with the remaining designations having a varied array of labels such as Specialist, Professional and Executive, that still leave a significant number at a non-entry level. From the information in the advertisements, it was possible to identify some differences in role and responsibilities between some of the

designations. For example, in many of the advertisements, a post carrying the designation 'Manager' was usually described as having some managerial role, either for staff and/or an area of work, suggesting some degree of seniority. By comparison, the designation 'Officer' was usually described as a supporting role and/or delivery role, suggesting a more junior role.

Moreover, if the function were strategic, then policy and strategy would have featured more strongly as tasks (they were cited in only one tenth of the advertisements), and would have increased in frequency over time rather than decreased, as is suggested by the data. Examining the issue from the perspective of the skills asked for in the job advertisements does little to add weight to the argument that HRD/Training has become strategic. The advertisements place greater emphasis on training delivery skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, and facilitation skills than on more obviously strategic elements such as 'Strategic Thinking' (3.3%), 'Leadership' (3.1%), 'Analytical Ability' (2.6%) and 'Vision' (0.8%).

As another source of information about the degree of strategicness of the function, survey respondents were asked to assess the HRD/Training function in public sector organisations against the ten constituent parts of a model of strategic HRD/Training. The assumption was that in order for the HRD/Training function to be truly strategic it would need to achieve a 'Tight Fit' rating on all the ten dimensions of the adapted framework. As a reminder, the concept of fit, as applied in this case refers to the operational relationship between the HRD/Training and key parts and processes of the organisation and the degree to which it is in alignment with and supportive of these, with Tight fit at one end of the 'fit' spectrum (suggesting strong alignment with and responsiveness to its

business context) and Fragile fit at the other (suggesting a state of vulnerability and poor alignment with and responsiveness to the business). Minimal fit refers to the state of in-between where there is a moderate degree of alignment and responsiveness which is at risk if not maintained. According to the results, the HRD/Training function corresponded to the ‘Tight Fit’ (strategic) dimension on only four of the ten dimensions and to the ‘Loose Fit’ (non-strategic) category on six of the ten dimensions (see Table 8.2). This confirms that while some progress has been made, based on this data, the case for strategic HRD/Training seems weak.

Table 8.1: 10 Strategic HRD/Training Dimensions

Item	Dimension Description	Present Fit
1	Strong, consistent and active partnership with managers	Loose
2	Strong, consistent, well-established feedback between function & senior managers	Loose
3	Strong, consistent and active top management support for the function	Tight
4	Strong, consistent, active partnership between the HR & HRD/Training function	Tight
5	HRD/Training helps shape and supports corporate strategy	Loose
6	Long term, focused, well-structured HRD/Training’s goals, policies & plans	Tight
7	HRD/Training goals, policies, plans & corporate strategy strongly aligned	Tight
8	Function frequently scans environment & is responsive to opportunities & threats	Loose
9	Stakeholders view function's role as a strategic, organisation development expert	Fragile/Loose
10	Function undertakes multi-level evaluations including organisational impact	Loose

3.2 HRD/Training’s relationship with corporate strategy

HRD/Training’s relationship with corporate strategy is another important dimension of strategicness. There is agreement that in order for HRD/Training to be considered as

strategic, it needs to closely align itself with corporate strategy (Beer & Spector 1989; Garavan et al 1995; Harrison 1997). In this study, survey respondents reported the HRD/Training function's goals, policies and plans were now more strategically oriented with 60% of respondents citing that these were now long term, focused and well-structured and 61% of respondents indicating that these were now strongly aligned with corporate strategy compared with five years ago. However, the HRD/Training function has continued to be more reactive to corporate strategy (62.8%) rather than influencing and shaping it (30.3%), which McCracken & Wallace have suggested is an important indicator of the function being a strategic operation (McCracken & Wallace 2000).

3.3 HRD/Training & Leadership Development

Other indicators of 'strategicness' include HRD/Training's role in leadership development, an aspect of employee development that is frequently taken as being of strategic importance (Wallis et al 2007; OECD 2001; Behn 1998; Alimo-Metcalf & Lawler 2001; Boaden 2006; Newell 2004). Although leadership and leadership development is given emphasis in contemporary management discourse, surprisingly, in the job advertisements, the frequency of the demand for applicants with expertise/experience in leadership development declined from 22.9% in 1996-7 to 6.7% in 2003-4.

One explanation is that, in keeping with the trend of outsourcing HRD/Training discussed in the Literature Review, leadership development work has been increasingly located outside the function. That is, fewer organisations are offering in-house leadership development, opting instead for external provision and providers. It is further suggested that this is likely to be because the internal HRD/Training provision is not seen as having

the necessary credentials (being too ‘light-weight’, ‘not having the requisite gravitas’, ‘not having the credibility’) to take on such a role – leadership development is often treated as a strategic issue and therefore ‘safeguarded’ as far as possible as illustrated by the largely outsourced provision of Senior Civil Service development programmes including those managed by the National School of Government. This serves as another indicator of how the internal HRD/Training function is perceived – in this case, not competent to take on this area of strategic delivery. However, one interviewee, a HRD/Training practitioner, offered an alternative explanation: “*Maybe those undertaking more strategic roles, including leadership development, get promoted into the role – as part of career progression – and it is the more junior, entry level posts that get advertised externally.*”

3.4 Relationship with managers

Establishing a strong working relationship with managers is presented as another indicator of HRD/Training operating strategically and a precondition of it securing strategic status - 75.4% of survey respondents cited it as an important factor in the function improving its organisational status. Strong partnerships with managers are seen as particularly important given the trend of increased devolvement of responsibility for employee development to line managers (Gibb 2003; Hamlin 2002).

The manager’s role in employee development was an issue raised by some of those interviewed during this study. Several interviewees expressed concern about some managers’ capacity to take on such a responsibility, suggesting that managers might lack experience, confidence, and time to undertake this aspect of their role:

“From my experience due to workloads, not much time can be dedicated to HRD/Training.” (Line Manager)

“Developing staff...there is an inconsistency of treatment of staff...some managers don't care; some staff have more access and some have less access to development support...it's the luck of the draw who your manager is...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

Interestingly, experience of working with managers was cited in only 16.3% of the HRD/Training job advertisements overall and its frequency only increased marginally by 0.6% between 1996-7 and 2003-4. This finding is confirmed by the survey finding showing that HRD/Training's partnership with managers was not seen as having improved over time but rather remaining 'loosely structured, intermittent and variable': *“It is a legitimate part of the manager's job to advise and to assist the development of staff. They have responsibility for individuals and should get support from the HRD function...but this is lacking.”* (Line manager). These findings suggest that this is another dimension of 'strategicness' against which the HRD/Training role does not fare too well.

3.5 HRD/Training's Reporting Line

As suggested by Rainbird (1994) and others, reporting line is taken as yet another indicator of HRD/Training being treated as strategic. The survey data showed that more than half (53.4%) the Heads of the HRD/Training function report to the Head of Human Resources (HR)/Personnel. By comparison, significantly fewer, 11.1%, reported to a Chief Executive (CEO) or Permanent Secretary in the case of civil service organisations, or a Management Board. This is not surprising given that in terms of organisation structure, the HRD/Training function still tends to be treated as a sub-set of the Human Resources function rather than a separate function. One of the points about the reporting

line is its connection with visibility – if you report to the CEO/Board to be in their line of sight, visible and have access to information and processes of a strategic nature. Having considered the ‘strategicness’ of the HRD/Training function, the next section explores the factors seen as having the potential to improve the organisational status of HRD/Training.

4 Measures for Improving Organisational Status

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to rank which, of a list of ten different factors, they considered to be the key to HRD/Training improving its status. Interestingly, respondents identified *'demonstrating a link between its role and performance management'* (78.4%), *'having a stronger partnership with managers'* (75.7%) and *'having greater access to and more visible support from top management'* (62%), as factors most likely to improve the function’s organisational status. This finding is consistent with the considerable emphasis given to proving a link between HRD/Training and performance in the literature (Huselid 1995; Schuler & Jackson 1987; Stiles & Kulvisaechana 2003; Zwick 2002), working in partnership with managers (Antonacopoulou 2002; Garavan et al 1995; 1998) and having top management support (Raey 1994; Garavan et al 1995; McCracken & Wallace 2000).

Additionally, nearly 60% of respondents cited *'making the role more clear and explicit'* as an important factor in HRD/Training improving its status and this is consistent with what has been reported elsewhere (McLagan 2004; Regalbutto 1991; Reid & Barrington 2001; Donnelly 1994). In terms of making sense of the status of a function, most people need to have a clear grasp of what it is and what it does (Whitfield et al 1996; Regalbutto

1991). Donnelly (1994) has argued that HRD/Training is still establishing a distinct organisational identity and, undoubtedly, the numerous titles (146) describing broadly similar types of work weakens this endeavour and adds to the confusion about its role.

Interestingly, compared with around a quarter of managers (25.3%) very few HRD/Training specialists (8.3%) rated *'employing professionally qualified staff'* as an important factor in HRD/Training improving its status. This is curious given that organisational status is, amongst other things, associated with qualifications (McLaughlin & Webster 1998). It could, in part, be rooted in the fact that HRD/training practitioners place a higher value on practical 'know-how' rather than academic learning.

Further, *'Access to and more visible support from top management'* had the largest difference in response between two groups of survey respondents with managers (48.4%) citing it as less important than HRD/Training specialists (70.4%). Clearly, the perception of the HRD/Training specialists is consistent with both the literature (Rainbird 1994; Kanter 1979) and the feedback focus group discussions and meetings with HRD/Training practitioners that highlight this as a major factor in HRD/Training improving its status within the organisation.

More significantly, respondents reported top management support for the HRD/Training function as having improved significantly over the past five years and indicated that it was now *'strong, consistent and active'*. Considering this in conjunction with the finding that HRD/Training's status continues to be weak and problematic, this suggests that while top management support is important, it is only part of the 'solution' to the status problem.

Having said all this, and accepting the limitations introduced by the fact that respondents may have not had the same shared understanding of the concept of strategic HRD/Training, the survey findings showed although 62.3% of respondents reported that the HRD/Training function had become significantly or greatly 'more strategic' over the past five years, this was not matched by a reported corresponding increase in status. This might suggest that even if being strategic is the answer to some of HRD/Training's status troubles, it might not be the entire answer or the only answer. Having examined the organisational status issue, what follows is a discussion of the other, equally important, part of the HRD/Training's status conundrum, that is, its occupational and professional status.

5 Competing for Professional Status: the pitch and the pitfalls

HRD/Training's status as an occupation and a profession is another theme explored in this study. It was assumed that HRD/Training organisational status and professional status are intertwined, as will be reflected in the discussion that follows. As part of this study, HRD/Training was compared against the commonly accepted characteristics of high status occupations and professions as articulated in some of the classic studies of professions (Freidson 1973; Elliott 1972; Dingwall & Lewis 1983; Abbott 1988; Macdonald 1995). HRD/Training came across as weak in many areas. For example, the literature has suggested that 'high status' occupations and professions are characterised by such features as extensive education and training, exclusive ownership of specific types of expertise, regulated entry, standards of certification, professional autonomy and a distinct, shared identity (Dingwall and Lewis 1983; Chung and Whifield 1999; Whitfield et al 1996; Abbott 1988; Turner 2001).

When HRD/Training was assessed against each of these main defining characteristics of a profession, its profile emerged as comparatively weak. By way of illustrating this point, one of the most striking challenges HRD/Training faces as a profession is its lack of a clear, distinct, shared identity (Regabulto 1991; Blake 1995; Holton 2002; Ruona 2000; Donnelly 1984):

“...a major barrier for HRD professionals is that ...As a profession, we have not done a very good job of working to identify who we are, what we stand for, and what we can do for those we serve.” (Ruona 2000 p.2).

Although it is accepted that part of this is about managing stakeholder perceptions of the role, the crux of the problem is HRD/Training’s failure to represent itself as a distinct category of work, as one fast-track graduate manager’s comment illustrates:

“I’m sorry, but what is ‘HRD’? What does it mean...?”

This problem is undoubtedly exacerbated by its myriad of sometimes vague job titles mentioned earlier (143 were identified in the analysis of HRD/Training job advertisements), which has contributed to what Walton called the “fuzziness” around the HRD/Training role (Walton, 2003; 2001). Highlighting the “very fuzzy categorisation” of the term HRD, Walton cites a comment from Thames Valley University on the 1995 University Forum for HRD position statement:

“There seems to be great scope for confusion about the labels attached to this whole domain. The position statement seeks to draw boundaries that we do not recognise. It suggests that Training & Development is a separate area from organisation development and career development and all are within HRD. It also states that HRD is separate

from HRM yet organisation development and career development are certainly within HRM in our perceptions.” (Walton 2003 p: 316).

Sharing this sense of confusion, one line manager interviewed during this study stated:

“I really don’t like the word ‘HRD’; it seems like techno babble. It sounds so impersonal.”

Clearly, HRD/Training is not alone in facing this identity challenge – Whitfield et al in a study of physiotherapists, argued that they lacked a clear identity and that the public and even some other health care professionals were unable to differentiate physiotherapy from related health care occupations (Whitfield et al 1996). HRD/Training’s identity problem is further compounded because, unlike some of the more established professions, anyone can set themselves up as an HRD/Training practitioner, almost regardless of background and training. Entry into HRD/Training work is not regulated and at present does not require any common practitioner qualification or certification, as highlighted by some of the focus group participants’ comments:

“[Is HRD/Training a profession?] Only in a limited sense – because of the qualification issue; anyone can get into training...” (HR/Personnel specialist)

“In a profession, the work is regulated and monitored; in training it is not.”
(Line manager)

Further, the job advertisements analysis showed that just fewer than half (47.2%) of the HRD/Training posts demanded a professional qualification and only 8.3% of HRD/Training specialists surveyed cited *‘employing professionally qualified staff’* as an important factor in HRD/Training improving its status. This leaves HRD/Training

vulnerable to the accusation that it is largely a ‘common sense’ activity and one where any specialist/technical knowledge can be easily and quickly absorbed. As one fast-track manager said: *“It [HRD/Training] has a certain amount of gobbledy-gook, jargon that gives the impression that you need to be a specialist to understand it...”* (Fast-track manager)

Based on discussions with HRD/Training practitioners and as illustrated by the multitude of training and development skills guidebooks on the market (see the American Society of Training and Development’s website www.astd.org for a list of some of the most popular ones), undisputedly, many HRD/Training practitioners do believe they hold specialist, exclusive skills and knowledge. However, based on the findings of this study, HRD/Training practitioners’ claim to any exclusive body of knowledge or expertise is fairly weak.

As the job advertisements findings illustrate, the skills and knowledge demanded of HRD/Training practitioners at the point of recruitment are fairly generic – communication, presentation skills, influencing skills - and those that might be considered as slightly more specialist (such as training design or evaluation) can be easily learned through short (one or two day) programmes such as those offered by CIPD’s (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) – the UK’s national human resources professional association – and various accredited centres.

Judged against the established characteristics of profession, therefore, HRD/Training does not fare very well which leaves its status as a profession – at least in the traditional sense of the term - in some doubt. Further empirical support for this proposition is found

in the findings of the occupational ranking exercise that formed part of the survey. These confirm that HRD/Training is perceived as having a comparatively weak occupational status. HRD/Training fared little better on the occupational rankings than it did in the organisational ranking exercise. Overall, on occupational status, it was ranked 7th and the results were broadly similar across the four individual dimensions.

The assumption that respondents working in the HRD/Training function gave a higher ranking to the HRD/Training function across the four dimensions was tested. Although HRD/Training practitioners and HR/Personnel specialists did give a slightly higher ranking to HRD/Training on some of the dimensions, there was a high level of consistency of response across the roles. Compared with two other occupations similarly engaged with facilitating learning, development and education – that of university lecturer and teacher – HRD/Training was ranked comparatively lower (Table 8.5). It is worth briefly considering what might account for this difference.

Table 8.2: Occupational Ranking of HRD/Training

Dimension	HRD/Trainer Ranking	Lecturer Ranking	Teacher Ranking
Standard of Living	7 th	3 rd	5 th
Qualifications	8 th	2 nd	5 th
Power & Influence	8 th	3 rd	2 nd
Value to Society	6 th	5 th	3 rd
Overall Ranking	7 th	2 nd	3 rd

One of the obvious explanations for this is that lecturers and teachers are seen as having specific qualifications, skills and expertise, and are treated as contemporary members of a conventionally powerful and influential grouping, what Bottomore termed ‘the intellectual elite’:

“Among the social groups which have risen to prominence in the tremendous social and political changes of the twentieth century three elites – the intellectuals, the managers of industry and the high government officials – have often been singled out as the inheritors of the functions of earlier ruling classes and as vital agents in the creation of new forms of society.” (Bottomore 1973 p.69)

“The intellectuals...are generally regarded as ... those who contribute directly to the creation, transmission and criticism of ideas...(in literate societies they appear as) writers, artists, scientists, philosophers, religious thinkers, social theorists, political commentators... in non-literate societies as magicians and priests, as poets and minstrels, as genealogists and so on...” (ibid p.70)

Historically, the academics and teachers were accorded a high social value by virtue of their ‘intellectual activity’ and the vestiges of this categorisation have been carried through into modern times and are reflected in the present day status values attributed to the two occupations. Traditionally, intellectual elites were distinguished by their level of education and qualifications (Bottomore 1973). As expected, lecturer and teachers are required to have specific basic entry level qualifications; HRD/Training practitioners have no such requirement. As the ranking data shows that both the former were ranked as having higher levels of qualifications than HRD/Training practitioners). More generally,

both lecturers and teachers have controlled entry and established career routes; HRD/Training does not. Both school education and higher education are often subject to policy debates. As such, they tend to have a higher level of public visibility; workplace learning and development is much less visible at both the policy and public interest level. This is illustrated by the latter occupying fewer column-inches in the popular press than the former.

Before moving on from the issue of HRD/Training's comparatively weak occupational status, what follows is a brief consideration of two additional factors that exacerbate this situation: the low profile given to the status issue within the wider HRD/Training practitioner community and HRD/Training being one of many occupations competing to secure an improved status.

6 Competing for Status: a shared concern

It is interesting to note that HRD/Training is not alone in its pursuit of enhanced occupational and professional status. In fact, it is one among several organisational functions jostling for position and among many quasi-professions struggling with the issue of weak status (Turner 2001; Chung & Whitfield 1998). For example, feedback received during the post-survey discussions suggests that those in the procurement function – which was given the lowest occupational ranking - are having national level debates about status and looking for ways to enhance their image as a profession.

Merely being accepted as a profession in itself may not necessarily improve HRD/Training's status. Leaving aside the complexities of the reasons for status differences between different professions, the point is that even if HRD/Training were to

be more widely accepted as a profession, this might not necessarily lead to a significant change in its status.

This chapter has focused on the issue of HRD/Training's organisational and occupational/professional status. In the context of the original aim of this study, one main issue remains to be discussed. That is, the extent to which the HRD/Training role might have changed of the past five to ten years.

The remainder of the chapter will address this issue and provide specific examples of ways in which the HRD/Training function has changed (the case of change) and stayed the same (the case of continuity) over the period. It is argued that, based on the research findings, the case of continuity is stronger than the case of change, as the following will illustrate.

7 The Triumph of Continuity over Change

Although, overall, the findings show that the HRD/Training function still has some way to go before it can claim to be a strategic operation, it is making progress. The survey results suggest that, in terms of change, it was perceived to have become more strategically oriented in some aspects of its practice over the past five years; however, many important facets of its work are not at all strategically oriented. In keeping with the trend reported in the literature (Nijhof 2004; Garavan et al 1997; Garavan et al. 1999; McGoldrick et al 2002), HRD related activities took on greater significance over the seven year period. For example, analysis of the data showed that the main tasks that were identified in the HRD/Training job advertisement had changed significantly from the period studied in 1996-7 and 2—4-5. However, closer examination of the data indicated

that although HRD's tasks increased significantly in frequency from 8.6% in 1996-7 to 33.7% in 2003-4, 'Training' and 'Training Management' remained the most frequently cited tasks for both 1996-7 (72.1%) and 2003-4 (57.3%). Further, although HRD was more prominent as an area of required expertise in 2003-4 than in 1996-7, the operational aspects of the training and development – training design and delivery – continued to dominate HRD/Training tasks and there has been little change in the qualities and abilities most frequently demanded of HRD/Training practitioners.

These findings, suggesting that there has been little substantive change over the past seven years in the type of experience and expertise valued in HRD/training posts, were supported by some of the survey findings. According to the survey analyses, respondents reported that stakeholders largely continued to view the HRD/Training role as administrative and/or deliverer of HRD/Training programmes - akin to Tyson's and Fell's 'clerk of works' (Tyson and Fell 1992; Tyson 1995) and still more 'reactive, prescriptive and administrative' than 'proactive, descriptive and executive' (Boxall, 1994). Further, these findings are consistent with those of Nijhof's longitudinal study of Dutch HRD/Training practitioners (Nijhof 2005) who found that the role of HRD/Training had in fact broadly remained the same over the period and largely still focused on training delivery as opposed to the wider range of development activities that HRD is intended to encompass.

In terms of perceptions of change around the ten dimensions of 'strategic fit' the HRD/Training function was not seen as having shifted/remained unchanged. Four of the

ten dimensions - namely, *top management support, relationship with the human resources function, the state of the HRD/Training function's goals, policies and plans, and the alignment of these goals, policies and plans with corporate strategy* were reported as having changed, and most of these shifted from the category 'Loose Fit' (for five years ago) to 'Tight Fit' (at the time of the survey).

Based on these findings, it would be too simplistic to state that the function has changed or has not changed - too bland and inadequate in reflecting the complexity of the situation. Certainly, the HRD/Training function has undergone some, albeit small scale, change, specifically in terms of some of its products and delivery methods. However, the key word in the original research question is '*significantly*' - that is, has the HRD/Training function changed '*significantly*', taken to mean '*widely and deeply*'. From the evidence in this study, it would be fair to argue that this has not been the case. Any change that has occurred within the function has been 'micro-evolutionary', narrow, and focused more on improving delivery methods and tools than structural repositioning (Kanter et al, 1992). As confirmed by some of HRD/Training practitioners during the interviews and debriefing sessions, there has been more change at the level of micro level practice and tools and less at the structural level:

"The main change has been that courses have got shorter - whereas, before we might have been running the same courses for a couple of weeks, we now run in a couple of days." (HRD/Training practitioner)

"Now the attitude is changing. The message now is that management push toward business related courses, and away from developmental courses...and we have to show business benefits of each programme." (HRD/Training practitioner)

This study suggests that, on balance, the HRD/Training function has been subject to a greater degree of continuity than change, and certainly more so than suggested by the literature. Some of the HRD/Training literature has taken an overly optimistic view of the degree of change and that change in terms of the HRD/Training role has largely been at the level of professional and organisational rhetoric and not in practice. ‘Rhetoric’ is an interesting concept. In keeping with many others, Walton (2003) has defined it as attempts at persuasion through spoken performances or written texts. Further, referring to his article on the efficacy of the term HRD, Walton comments:

“As an exercise in rhetoric, this article is an attempt to persuade a scholarly community that the term HRD is not in itself persuasive (counterproductive even) in creating meaning, and that the community itself has not been convincing in its own rhetorical attempts to convince others of its suitability.” (Walton 2003 p: 313).

Linked to this, the continuing debate about the robustness of change research (that is, whether it is a cumulative and falsifiable body of knowledge), and the accusations that it is ‘light weight’ could equally be levelled at existing HRD/Training research:

“A few theoretical propositions are repeated without additional data or development; a few bits of homey advice are reiterated without proof or disproof; and a few sturdy empirical observations are quoted with reverence but without refinement or explication.” (Kahn, 1974 pp: 487, repeated in Weick and Quinn 1999 pp: 363).

Some of the HRD/Training literature is conceptually rather than empirically based (McGoldrick et al 2001; McCracken and Wallace 2000) and presents an idealised framework of HRD/Training that is intended to serve as a banner for aspirational change, as opposed to mirroring current practice. Intentionally or unintentionally, this has become converted into the established repertoire and rhetoric around the role and position of HRD/Training, and accepted by many as 'lived reality'. Although HRD/Training might be operating strategically in some aspects of its role, there is a strong indication that the practice might not quite have kept up with the rhetoric (Reid & Barrington 2001; Harrison 1997; Nijhoff 2004). As Nijhoff has argued:

"The real world of HRD work and the world of 'theory', marketing and imagination are completely different" (Nijhof 2004 p:69).

Part of the rationale for representing HRD/Training work as strategic is clearly the assumption that it can be used as a defence against any attacks on the value of the function and profession (Vere 2005). For example, Vere (2005) argues that, human resources practitioners (and this includes those in the HRD/Training function), especially those in the public sector, are under pressure to improve efficiency and subject to reductions in numbers, and 'building the strategic capability of the function' is seen as a safeguard against these pressures. Clearly, the concept of 'strategic' has widely infiltrated the organisational mindset to the extent that anything that is tagged 'strategic' is assumed to signify a higher level of organisational value. The label 'strategic' is now used endlessly as a prefix for numerous aspects of organisational practice ranging from well-established examples such as '*strategic planning*' and '*strategic leadership*' to the newer examples such as '*strategic commissioning*', '*strategic policy making*', '*strategic*

change management, *strategic finance management*, and even *strategic relationship management*, in many cases as suggested by Boaz and Solesbury writing about the use of the term in political life, it only being use to denote importance or seriousness.

By way of explanation, it is suggested that the HRD/Training role is primarily operational and focused on front-end delivery of training and development events but it is being represented and labelled as strategic, particularly by those in the function, for purposes of selling its organisational value, and is mirroring its aspirational goal rather than current role, tasks and priorities.

This explanation is supported by another interesting aspect of the survey findings. In response to a direct question about their perceptions of the extent to which the HRD/Training had become strategic over the past five to ten years, 62.3% of survey respondents indicated that the function had become 'significantly' or 'greatly' 'more strategic' compared with five years ago. However, their response to the more detailed question (Page 2007) about how the function had changed across ten individual dimensions of a model of strategic HRD/Training was more mixed, and overall the function was judged as not being strategic, only strategically oriented, on some dimensions.

Reflecting on what might account for this apparent inconsistency in the findings, the research suggests that the very concept 'strategic' has become such a strong feature of the broader organisational narrative that there is a high level of recognition of the term, which has infiltrated so many aspects of organisational practice and permeates much of everyday organisational reality. This continuous exposure has served to cultivate a state

of ‘collective conditioning’ around the word ‘strategic’ resulting in a heightened awareness of the concept – rather like building brand identity.

Accordingly, the question about whether or not HRD/Training had become strategic, when posed explicitly, elicited a reasonably high level of positive response. However, when respondents were guided through a series of specific aspects of how the function operated – and had to, perhaps, think a little more about their responses – their responses were more mixed. This tendency of more realistic reporting when respondents are taken through an issue in detail has previously been raised by Page of MORI, the market research organisation (Page 2006).

Some of the participants ‘privately’ accepted that there was still some way to go before they could claim that the HRD/Training function occupied a strategic position within their organisations. They indicated that they needed to present and maintain a confident public image of their work within and around the organisation, and latching onto the ‘strategic tag’ helped them with this objective.

8 Summary and Concluding Comments

Since the mid-1990s, much of the human resources literature has strongly suggested that the function has changed (McCracken and Wallace, 2000; Garavan 1998; Rainbird 1994; Carter et al 2002) and specifically become notably more strategic (Morton & Wilson, 2003; McGoldrick et al 2001; CIPD 2001). This has served to cultivate a wide scale, influential, if not rather over-inflated ‘new rhetoric’ around the role, position and status of HRD/Training.

This chapter has attempted to critically evaluate the validity of this ‘new rhetoric’. Essentially, the picture is less clear cut and reflects what is, in fact, a rather a complex situation in which the HRD/training role is in a state of flux, a work in progress, and on a continuous journey toward becoming strategic and improving its status. Although elements of the HRD/Training function’s role have changed over the past five to ten years, it has, nevertheless, been subject to more continuity than change. Also, although it has been seen to be operating more strategically in some aspects of its work, based on the evidence in this research, it is not possible to say whether or not it is strategic; and, while it might be operating more professionally, it still faces significant challenges in terms of its organisational and professional status.

Given the parameters of this study – it was not longitudinal and there was no specific baseline for judging its status five to ten years ago - it was difficult to determine if the status of the function has improved. However, what is clear is that its current organisational and occupational/professional status is weak and problematic. Notably, it was ranked comparatively low on both the organisational and occupational ranking exercise, confirming the view of some that it continues to struggle with its status inside and outside the organisation. The bottom-line is that although some have argued that the function has changed and become more strategic over time, and that this had strengthened its status, this finding was not consistent with its overall status ranking. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that of the three original hypotheses, the first was disproved and the remaining two were inconclusive (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.3: Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Number	Hypothesis	Findings
1	The organisational status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations is strong and its occupational standing is high.	Disproved
2	The role of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations has changed significantly over the past 5-10 years.	Inconclusive
3	The role and position of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations has become strategic over the past 5-10 years.	Inconclusive

Finally, this study has provided a number of significant insights into the role, structure and status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations. Significantly, it has challenged some of the perspectives being presented in the HRD/Training literature about changes to the HRD/Training role and status and in doing so has the potential to refresh the debate about the HRD/Training function's standing within UK public sector organisations.

Chapter 9

Conclusions, Implications and Future Directions

“...it’s an issue of indispensability...” (Interviewee: HR/Personnel Specialist, Chapter 5)

1. Introduction

This chapter summarises the main features and findings of this study and to aims to present some conclusions. To do this clearly, accurately and usefully, it will cover three broad areas: the overall findings of the study and their implications for those in the HRD/Training function and industry, the strengths and limitations of the research methodology, and the potential directions for future HRD/Training research.

This study emerged from a position of questioning some of the basic assumptions made in the literature about the role and status of the HRD/Training function. Specifically, it tried to determine the reality from the aspirational in terms of the extent to which HRD/Training has become and been accepted as a strategic partner. Further, it attempts to understand what, if any, is the relationship between its role and its status. As such, it offers a critique of the existing perspectives of strategic HRD/Training, and specifically questions its prevalence in practice, The particular value of this work is that it is empirically based, uses a mix-methods approach as a means of deriving a deeper and wider perspective of the issues of concern, and offers a framework for conceptualising strategic HRD.

2. Re-Thinking the Concept and Practice of Strategic HRD/Training

2.1 Introductory Comments

The changing nature of the personnel/human resources function has been debated at length (Truss et al 2002; Ulrich et al 1995; Bach 1994; Barney & Wright 1998; Barnett et al 1996; Belout et al 2001; Boxall 1994, 1996; Caldwell 2001; Lundy 1994; Tamkin et al 1997; Suff 1998; Vere 2005; Jensen 2003; IRS 1996; 2003) and the value - operational and symbolic - of HRD/Training as a sub-set of broader HRM has been well considered (Sisson, 1989; IRS 1998, 2002; Hyman 1992). Conceptual explorations of HRD/Training's role are available in abundance (Walton 2003; Kuchinke 2004; Garavan, 1991; 1997; Garavan et al 2000, 2002; Holton, 2002; Vince 2003; Smith 2007) and accounts of HRD/Training methods are plentiful (Harrison, 1997; Reid and Barrington, 1999; Buckley and Caple 1995; Geber 1995; Nixon & Pitts 1991; Duggett 1996; Goslin 1979; Veale 1996; Mathieson 2006; Dobson & Tosh 1998). However, there are relatively few robust critiques of the status of the HRD/Training function (Gold et al 2002; Keep, 1995; 2005).

With this in mind, this study has approached the subject of HRD/Training differently. It is not concerned with providing a descriptive account of the latest techniques and gadgetry but rather with questioning critically the current role, position and status of HRD/Training as an organisational function and as a professional activity. Particularly, the intention was to examine the prevailing perspective, albeit primarily driven by practitioner oriented literature that HRD/Training had changed and now become a strategic operation, both in terms of its structural position and its practice. To reiterate,

existing, influential accounts of the HRD/Training role and status (some that are without a strong empirical foundation as suggested by Mole, 1996, and Keep, 1995) have given rise to a new rhetoric around HRD/Training, underpinned by three sets of assumptions: firstly, HRD/Training's role transformation; secondly, HRD/Training's shift to a strategic operation; and, thirdly, its arrival as a profession. The next section will briefly comment on each of these assumptions.

2.2 The Assumption of Role Transformation

Much of the existing human resources literature presumes that the HRD/Training function has been subject to change and role transformation. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, this study's findings lead to the conclusion that, in fact, while some aspects of the HRD/Training role have changed, many aspects had a high level of continuity, even if only at the level of perception of those taking part in the survey and the focus groups and interviews.

It is accepted that both 'change' and 'role' are complex and multifaceted concepts, that change is a constant and that the more pertinent question is about the scale of change, and that the type of change observed is, to some extent, a matter of viewer perspective (Kanter et al 1992). However, given the dominant perspectives in the literature, albeit mainly in practitioner oriented literature, it was expected that there would be stronger evidence of the HRD/Training function having undergone '*significant*' change over the period in question. '*Significant*' was taken to mean that any change would be tangible, wide in scale and structural. This study questions the assumption of the role of HRD/Training function changed *significantly* over the past five to ten years and suggests that such change as there was, was not as wide, deep, or transformational as expected.

It is accepted that the concept of organisational role is multifaceted and encompasses everything from the main tasks that are assigned to the function, the skills and abilities demanded of those who work in the function, and even how it is labelled. In this sense, and consistent with the findings of other studies such as those of O'Brien and Thompson (1999), Sambrook (1998) and Nijhof (2005), this study's findings show that the role of HRD/Training function is seen as being mainly that of a training provider (Table 9.1 'Components of HRD/Training Role').

Table 9.1: Components of HRD/Training Role

Component	Description	Study Findings
Tasks	What it must do – Mandate	Training & Development; Management of T&D
Skills & Abilities	What it needs to have to do what it must do – Capability	Training design & delivery; communication, facilitation & influencing skills.
Titles	How it is represented –Role Labelling	'Training'; 'Training & Development'.
Perceptions	How others see it – Role Expectations	Training & Development administrator & provider

That is, while HRD/Training has broadened its range of methods and tools (specifically, the use of human resource development techniques other than training), its focus and position has remained operational and its role continues to be primarily defined in 'training delivery' and 'training administration' terms (see Table 7.2 HRD/Training Function's Identity).

Table 9.2: HRD/Training's Identity

Component	5-10 years ago	Present	Change
Role	Operational; T&D	Operational; T&D	-
Self-Perception	Operational; T&D	Strategic; HRD	√
Others' Perception	Operational; T&D	Operational; T&D	-

The discrepancy between the literature and the results of this research creates “*a deafening clash which invites enquiry*” (Mole 1996 p. 20). By way of an explanation, it is argued that some existing account of change are more a reflection of a shift in the narrative around HRD/Training - what Sambrook (1998; 2000) and Lee (2001) term the ‘HRD talk’ - as opposed to a shift in its practice or position. That is, the increasing number of practitioner and scholarly reports of a ‘changing HRD/Training function’ fuelled and accelerated the cultivation of a ‘collective mindset’ of change within the HRD/Training community. As one interviewee suggested:

“...it could be that the ‘best’ learning and development functions get written about in the practitioner literature and pick up on leading academic thinking, but the bulk of the learning and development functions and practitioners have not moved forward as fast or as far as the literature might suggest.”

In summary, to simply claim that HRD/Training has or has not changed would be too simplistic. It would fail to reflect the complexity of the existing situation. As one interviewee said:

“...the function...it could be that the spread or range of its approaches has changed but that the average remains largely the same.”

Having looked at the issue of the function’s role transformation, the discussion will now to move on to the second assumption, that of HRD/Training being strategic.

2.3 The Assumption of Strategic Practice and Position

The second assumption this research questions is of HRD/Training of having reinvented itself as a strategic operation. The findings of this research point to the conclusion that while elements of its practice may well have become more strategically oriented, the function has essentially remained operational in focus, role and organisational position. As argued in Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings and Emerging Themes, in order for the HRD/Training function to be accepted as strategic, it would need to fulfil a number of basic conditions. Here, it is argued that it would, in fact, need to meet all the criteria specified in the ‘tight strategic fit’ model mapped out in Figure 9.1.



Figure 9.1: *A Model of 'Tight Strategic Fit' HRD/Training Function*

It is argued that, assessed empirically against this framework, the case for strategic HRD/Training is weak. The research evidence in this study has shown that, overall, the HRD/Training function remains primarily operational with some strategically oriented aspects. This perspective is consistent with the findings of the Nijhoff's study of Dutch HRD/Training practitioners and O'Brien and Thompson's study of Irish HRD/Training practitioners. Based on their study, part of a wider, four European countries study, O'Brien & Thompson (1999) argued that HRD practitioners lacked certain organisational competencies (such as cost-benefit analysis and industry understanding) that would inhibit their move from a transactional to strategic role.

The research underpinning this thesis provides a clear set of indicators of strategic HRD/Training and identifies the areas where HRD/Training was seen as having made the highest levels of improvements: that is, in the quality of the HRD/Training function's goals, policies and plans and in the quality of alignment between these and corporate strategy. It is interesting to note that the greatest level of perceived improvement was in the areas of its practice where the function itself had a high degree of control.

Further, here, it is argued that simply improving some areas of its practice, such as the quality of its policies and plans, is not a sufficient condition for HRD/Training to claim strategic status. The findings show that the function falls well short of fulfilling the other basic criteria of 'strategicness' identified earlier. What actually exists is interplay between the 'aspirational' (what those in the business would like it to be) and the 'self-preservational' (the endeavour to emphasise the proximity of HRD/Training to core business priorities as a defence against potential threats). It reflects the flawed assumption that adopting the tag 'strategic' invariably raises the 'organisational currency'

of the service or operation and serves as a shield against the risk of organisational annihilation.

Simply adopting of a strategic tag is unlikely to shift the structural position or improve the status of the HRD/Training function. Further, this strategy of trying to reframe and represent HRD/Training as strategic is not without its risks. In striving to 'sell' its strategicness, HRD/Training might in fact be "*romancing the frontiers while ignoring the core*" (Vince 2003 p. 563). Its re-invention endeavour might be seen to be diverting its energy from what it does best, that is, delivering learning programmes.

It is well known that some key stakeholders, such as line managers, expect the HRD/Training function – whatever else it does - to deliver training. In this context, and especially if resources within the HRD/Training function are limited, it might be counterproductive to invest in a strategy that moves the function away from delivering what the majority of its stakeholders expect and want (Truss et al 2002; Garavan et al 1995).

This could create the problem of promising more than can be delivered (given the existing capacity constraints). This study, in keeping with others, has shown that, currently, HRD/Training practitioner skills are heavily weighted in favour of the design and delivery of training/learning events and processes, and less well-developed in terms of strategic activities (O'Brien & Thompson 1999; Nijhoff 2005). Further, the findings of this study show that while many respondents (especially those in a human resources role), felt HRD/Training had become 'significantly' or 'greatly' more strategic, overall, fewer than half of all the survey respondents and only around a quarter of managers - reported

that this shift had ‘significantly or ‘greatly’ strengthened its status. This suggests that, in the case of the HRD/Training function, the argument that ‘being seen as strategic’ is the key to it acquiring higher status, is contestable. Specifically, it suggests that this finding serves as part of the evidence for the conclusion that (1) the function still had some way to go in improving its status and (2) the pursuit of ‘the mythical state of strategicness’ is at best only part of the answer to the status problem.

One of the main problem HRD/Training faces is that skills development as a whole continues to be undervalued and treated as a low priority issue (Keep 1989; Keep and Mayhew 1999). This is a significant factor in ‘handcuffing’ the HRD/Training function to a low rung of the organisational status ladder; and, as it stands, this is a situation that HRD/Training practitioners are relatively powerless to change. Without there being a dramatic shift in the organisational value attributed to employee development, the status of HRD/Training is likely to stay the same.

While operating, and being seen to be operating, strategically is undoubtedly necessary if the function is to improve its internal image, it is important for those working in HRD/Training to recognise that occupational status is determined by the complex interplay of a variety of interconnected factors. Simply refashioning itself as ‘strategic’ will not shift its structural status. As well as being ‘inwardly’ strategic (that is, in terms of delivery focus within the organisation), the HRD/Training industry needs to be ‘outwardly’ strategic as well (that is, give weight to the movement to raise the profile and position of skills development nationally). Having considered the idea of HRD/Training as strategic, the next section examines the third presumption, that of HRD/Training having established its professional status.

2.5 The Assumption of HRD/Training as a Profession

The third assumption that this study examines is that the HRD/Training has unequivocally arrived as a profession (Zahn 2001). To assess the validity of this claim, HRD/Training was assessed against the main characteristics commonly associated with traditional professions. Even though the result might constitute what Weber termed as an '*inconvenient fact*' (as cited in McIntyre 2002), HRD/Training did not fare very well in terms of several of the criteria traditionally associated with high status professions.

It is accepted that some in the HRD/Training business would contest this argument. Perhaps what this flags up is the common confusion between the following set of related concepts - 'a profession', 'being professional' and 'acting professionally'. Those involved in the HRD/Training delivery might legitimately claim to be 'acting professionally' and 'being professional' in their day-to-day work. However, it is argued that the act of behaving professionally is not a sufficient condition for securing the status of a profession. It is suggested that some have confused the idea of HRD/Training operating professionally and it being positioned as a profession and wrongly treat the two concepts as interchangeable (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3: Comparing Concepts of 'Profession' & 'Professional'

Feature	Characteristics
Positioned as Profession	Regulated entry; baseline professional qualifications; common code of practice; independent regulatory body/professional association; distinct, shared identity; exclusive knowledge & expertise; career ladders.
Operating as Professional	Timely delivery expected & required service; appropriate interpersonal skills eg: courtesy, effective communication; ethical behaviour.

Further, the professional status of the HRD/Training function in public sector organisations might be subject to additional complexity. Davies (1983) has questioned the viability of certain types of work being tagged as 'professional'. When the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations was assessed against the dimensions within Davies' Model of the Professional/Bureaucracy Conflict (Davies 1983), there appeared to be a 'point of divergence' between HRD/Training's professional aspirations and the constraints it faces as a structure within public sector organisations (classic bureaucracies) - Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: HRD/Training's Fit within Adapted Version of Davies' Model of Professional/Bureaucracy Conflict (Davies 1983)

Feature	Bureaucracy	HRD	Professional	HRD
Task	partial, interdependent	√	complete, sole work	-
Training	short, within organisation, a specialized skill	√	long, outside the organisation, a total skill	-
Legitimation	is following rules	√	is doing what is known to be correct	-
Compliance	is supervised	√	is socialized	-
Loyalty	to the organisation	√	to the profession	-
Career	ascent in the organisational hierarchy	?	often no further career steps in the organization	?

It is accepted that becoming established as a profession and being seen as a profession is an essential part of the process of HRD/Training consolidating its status, while Zahn has argued that HRD/Training "...unequivocally has arrived as a profession" (Zahn 2001 pp.36). He cites its credentials, body of specialised knowledge, "*condensation symbols*" (Gill & Whittle 1993 p.290) - language known only to other practitioners in the same profession - and shared career paths as some of the defining features of HRD/Training as profession. However, the findings of this study do not support this proposition, and its future prospects as a profession are difficult to estimate.

Many of the challenges HRD/Training faces in terms of establishing itself as a widely accepted profession have been discussed. It has been established that, typically, any profession needs some level of entry 'gate-keeping', unifying credentials and baseline qualifications, a shared, distinct identity, codes of conduct, a regulatory body and exclusive expertise. HRD/Training clearly has some way to go to match the required specifications of a profession.

For example, academic qualifications usually serve as a baseline criterion in many professions. However, according to the HRD/Training job advertisements data, the demand for academic qualifications decreased from 30.2% in 1996-7 to 20.7% in 2003-4. By placing a comparatively low emphasis on academic qualifications as a basic entry requirement, the HRD/Training industry might be limiting its capability and its perceived capability. To quote one of the focus group participants:

"I ask how well qualified or competent are the people running such courses...I am dubious about their ability to deliver something meaningful..."

This section considered some of the ways in which this study has challenged some existing presumptions about HRD/Training as an organisational function and as a profession. The next section will consider the specific ways in which this study has contributed to thinking about the concept of strategic HRD/Training.

3. Contribution to Reframing Strategic HRD/Training

As one distinct contribution to the body of knowledge of HRD/Training, this study offers a ‘new’, adapted model of strategic HRD, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This adapted conceptual framework of strategic HRD/Training provides a set of indicators against which HRD/Training functions can be assessed as a means of determining their relative ‘strategicability’ (see Table 9.5 below – An Integrated Model of Strategic HRD/Training).

Table 9.5: An Integrated Model of Strategic HRD/Training

Type of Fit/ Features of Strategic HRD/Training	Tight Fit tightly integrated, strategic, secure	Loose Fit Loosely integrated, non- strategic, vulnerable	Fragile Fit non-integrated, peripheral, vulnerable
Partnership with managers	Strong, consistent, active	Loosely structured, variable	Weak or non-existent
Feedback Loop	Strong, consistent, well- established	Moderate, variable, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
Top management support	Strong, consistent, active	Moderate, intermittent, variable	Weak or non-existent
Alignment with HR	Strong, consistent, active	Moderate, variable, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
Relationship with corporate strategy	Interdependent, two-way flow (shapes & supports)	Dependent, one-way flow (supports but does not shape)	Independent, now flow
HRD goals, policies, plans	Long term, focused, well structured	Short-term, focused, loosely structured	Weak or non-existent
Alignment with corporate strategy	Strong, consistent, active	Loose, intermittent, variable	Weak or no alignment
Environmental scanning & responsiveness	Frequent, active, responsive	Intermittent, reactive, partial	Rare or never
Stakeholder perceptions of role	Strategic, organisation development & change architect	HRD/Training provider/specialist	Training events administrator
Evaluations	Consistently at level of learning transfer & organisational impact	Individual reactions to training & development events	Infrequent, ad hoc, weak or non-existent

4. Contribution to Mapping the Agenda for the HRD/Training Industry

This study has also identified a number of important issues of concern to the HRD/Training industry, some of which will be outlined in this section. This study has served to add weight to those who have argued for HRD/Training to begin to critically examine its status (Regbulto 1991; Gold 2002). It suggests that a place to start might be for the HRD/Training community to work towards establishing a distinct, shared identity (which includes labelling itself clearly, simply and in a way that is easily understood by all), having unifying credentials and regulating entry (at the moment anyone can enter the business, without any proven competence or qualifications).

This would require a level of collective debate and decision-making within the industry. Realistically speaking, this is going to be easier said than done, in that HRD/Training lacks strong collective, national level representation – in fact, the HRD/Training industry could gain from rethinking its strategy for collective representation.

Some have argued that while CIPD (the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development) has set itself up as the ‘national voice’ of, and accrediting body for, human resources professionals, historically, members with a development role have drawn the short straw because CIPD has tended to invest considerably more energy in promoting the personnel/human resources management side of the business, and given much less attention to the ‘development’ part of the business. This has played its part in keeping the formation of a strong shared identity amongst HRD/Training practitioners in low-gear.

Those in the industry can re-label their work as much as they like (from ‘training’ to ‘HRD’; from ‘HRD’ to ‘strategic HRD’) but all this does is add to the existing confusion about the HRD/Training role and fails to tackle the troublesome issue that others in and outside the organisation can take all aspects of HRD/Training work, as illustrated by the increasing levels of internal devolvement and external outsourcing of parts of the function. On the theme of labelling the work of HRD/Training, this in itself is a problematic issue. Feedback from the focus groups and interviews suggests that there is a worrying level of confusion. Firstly, there is a great array of job titles in circulation (the job advertisements analysis identified 143 different job titles describing broadly similar types of work) and secondly, and in particular, the specific label ‘HRD’ is still too vague, ill-defined and poorly understood:

“I really don’t like the word ‘HRD’; it seems like techno-babble. It sounds so impersonal.” (Civil service manager)

The replacement of ‘training’ with ‘HRD’ as a job title has created a conceptual tug-of-war. On the one side, it has been argued that shifting terminology from ‘training’ to ‘HRD’ is a necessary means of highlighting the inherent value of the work, that is, that the term ‘HRD’ symbolically conveys the sense that the development of people (an essential organisational resource) is a vital organisational function and thereby of strategic value. However, on the other side, as shown by the focus group discussions with

non-HRD practitioners, the term seems to cause confusion in the minds of stakeholders and users. This impacts on its 'brand value' because prospective beneficiaries are not clear what is on offer. To quote one line manager participating in the focus group discussions:

“This constant name changing is off-putting.”

Further, there is a need for sharper thinking about how HRD/Training's role is marketed to stakeholders and prospective beneficiaries, specifically in terms of finding better ways to 'explain' the actual role of the HRD/Training and to demonstrate its potential and actual value. This includes providing a convincing, visible and palatable rationale for the shift in terminology from 'training' (one that most non-specialists understand) to 'HRD' (one that many non-specialists do not understand). This is important because it is a means of reducing the present risk of stakeholders viewing such a shift as 'merely cosmetic, irrelevant and worthless'. Here, it is worth noting that in terms of its potential value in changing perceptions, the effective internal marketing of organisational operations has been recognised as being of relevance to other types of work. For example, Whitfield et al (1996) have discussed the importance of marketing for physiotherapy as a means of promoting a better understanding and improved perceptions of its role within the health sector.

Although it would benefit HRD/Training to consider marketing itself better, currently it is not a significant feature of HRD/Training function's role. O'Brien and Thompson's (1999) study of Irish HRD practitioners showed that 'Marketing of HRD Services' was rated as a relatively low-key task and only cited by what the authors considered to be a small number (29%) of the respondents. It featured hardly at all in the HRD/Training job advertisements analysed as part of this study. This section has briefly highlighted some of the issues this research raises for the HRD/Training community as a whole. The next section briefly considers the implications of this study for future research,

5. The HRD/Training Research Agenda – Further Issues & Future Directions?

In terms of future research, this study has paved the way for future of perceptions of organisational functions, their role and their value. In terms of HRD/Training research more specifically, given the level of investment made in HRD/Training and given the continuing questions about its contribution and worth, it would be well worth investigating the role and status of HRD/Training further. Based on the issues raised within this study, it would be worth replicating aspects of this research on a wider scale and over a longer time frame. For example, it would be particularly interesting to repeat the organisational functions and occupational ranking exercise with a wider range of respondents in ten years time to monitor any change in perceptions of HRD/Training's status.

In terms of time-frame, it would have been interesting to have carried out a longitudinal study and to have analysed all the HRD/Training job advertisements featured in the *People Management* magazine over a seven to ten year period. However, time constraints

meant that data could only be gathered for a seven month period for the years 1996-7 and 2003-4. Further, given this study was partly about identifying areas of change within the HRD/Training function, it was important to allow a sufficient gap of time between the two data sets - in this case, practically, seven years was the most that could be achieved. This is because the chosen data source, the People Management magazine, only started publishing a reasonable vacancies listing in 1996. The research timetable was such that the data gathering process could not be left any later than early 2004.

However, accepting that documenting job advertisements is resource intensive, this is an opportunity for future research. A longitudinal study could usefully be carried out of job advertisements on a year by year basis over a longer term period and the results would be extremely informative in terms of mapping the features of change to the HRD/Training role and would serve to highlight whether some of the change promised/predicted in the HRD/Training literature actually emerges in the future.

Additionally, it would have been good to have analysed a random selection of HRD/Training job descriptions for both periods. This was problematic because it was difficult getting hold of job descriptions from five to ten years ago (very few organisations keep old job descriptions) and analysing and comparing job descriptions would have been very time consuming, even more so than gathering data from job advertisements. This problem has been noted by Sambrook in her study of HRD/Training in the UK National Health Service (Sambrook 1998). Nevertheless, analysing a sample of HRD/Training job descriptions from different organisations and over a number of years could provide some extremely interesting insights into the role and status of HRD/Training. Finally, continuing with the comparative theme, it might be interesting to

build in a European dimension in terms of national contexts. For example, it would be interesting to repeat the study across European member countries, if not worldwide, as a means of comparing trends internationally. This section considered some of the ways in which this study could serve as a basis for future research into the role, structure and status of the HRD/Training function. The next, and final section, will aim to sum up the conclusions of the study as a whole.

6. Final Conclusions

Essentially, this chapter has been concerned with reflecting on what this study hoped to achieve and what it actually achieved. At its broadest level, this study has usefully refreshed the debate around a number of contestable issues. Firstly, the extent and type of change within the HRD/Training function over the past five to ten years; secondly, the issue of the strategicness of HRD/Training; and, thirdly, the issue of its status and the potential for it to secure the kind of status practitioners are seeking.

Overall, this study has added to the body of knowledge of HRD/Training specifically in terms of its role and status. While the changing role of HRD/Training has been of concern for many decades (Gane 1972; Rainbird 1994; Sloman 2006), the particular value of this research is that it has taken an empirical, mixed-methods approach (Johnson et al 2007; Freshwater 2007) to analysing the change within and around the HRD/Training role. Further, while there has been considerable debate about the HRD/Training role and a great many publications about its delivery tools, much less has been written about the HRD/Training function's status. This study serves to fill this gap in several areas.

It suggests that despite increasing claims that HRD/Training is and is treated as a strategic actor, what this study shows is that essentially it is not entirely clear if this is the case and the concern is that what has been reflected in much of the ‘strategic HRD’ literature might well be a case of the triumph of ‘the aspirational’ over ‘the actual’. It has argued that structurally, the status of HRD/Training as an organisational function and as an occupation is weak and is unlikely to improve dramatically in the short to medium term future. The study has confirmed the prevalent view that in order to reposition itself, it needs to do better at demonstrating its organisational worth.

In terms of future trajectories, it is predicted that the internal HRD/Training function will be reshaped, reconfigured and ‘thinned out’ with the bulk of the delivery role being undertaken by external suppliers, with some types of e-enabled and e-supported delivery being co-sponsored and shared by several organisations (especially those within the public sector) under the umbrella of the ‘shared services’ drive. This, in turn, will do little to strengthen the image of the internal function or indeed HRD/Training as an aspiring profession.

Further, this study has taken an innovative approach, using a mix of research tools to examining the role and status of the HRD/Training function in UK public sector organisations. In doing so, it has challenged some of the basic taken-for-granted assumptions made by those in the industry and HRD/Training academics and illustrated that organisational research can be a rich, dynamic and absorbing process. Additionally, it is hoped that this research has provided a base for future studies of the role and status of the HRD/Training function – the study, or some elements of it, could usefully be replicated in future years to identify future changes and developments.

Finally, methodology, it adds weight to the value of using multiple research tools and the value of triangulation of data, and provides a baseline for future examinations of the role and status of HRD/Training. Conceptually, it offers an adapted model of 'strategic HRD' which again could be used to determine HRD/Training's levels of strategicness. Practically, its findings offer the practitioner community a set of possibilities to reflect on in terms of strengthening HRD/Training's position as an organisational function as well as a profession.

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Appendix 2: Additional Job Advertisements Data

Table A: Number & Types of Jobs 1996-7 & 2003-4

Edition of People Management	Total Posts n.	HR Posts n.	HRD posts n.	Total HR & HRD n.	HR posts %	HRD posts %
26 September 1996	160	119	41	160	74.4	25.6
10 October 1996	145	116	27	143	81.1	18.9
24 October 1996	173	125	45	170	73.5	26.5
07 November 1996	143	95	42	137	69.3	30.7
21 November 1996	174	135	37	172	78.5	21.5
05 December 1996	152	115	37	152	75.7	24.3
19 December 1996	101	76	25	101	75.2	24.8
23 January 1997	229	165	63	228	72.4	27.6
6 February 1997	187	131	54	185	70.8	29.2
20 February 1997	168	119	49	168	70.8	29.2
20 March 1997	178	135	43	178	75.8	24.2
25 September 2003	146	127	19	146	87.0	13.0
09 October 2003	119	95	22	117	81.2	18.8
23 October 2003	148	101	44	145	69.7	30.3
06 November 2003	167	132	26	158	83.5	16.5
20 November 2003	113	85	27	112	75.9	24.1
04 December 2003	141	108	30	138	78.3	21.7
18 December 2003	36	28	8	36	77.8	22.2
29 January 2004	217	176	36	212	83.0	17.0
12 February 2004	154	121	33	154	78.6	21.4
26 February 2004	144	119	24	143	83.2	16.8
25 March 2004	153	117	31	148	79.1	20.9
Total	3348	2540	763	3303	76.9	23.1

Table B: Comparison of Top Job Titles 1996-7 & 2003-4

Job Titles					
1996-7			2003-4		
Title	n.	%	Title	n.	%
Training	140	30.2	Training	50	16.7
Training & Development	86	18.6	Training & Development	48	16.0
Personnel & Training	45	9.7	Learning & Development	33	11.0
Management Development	19	4.1	Organisation Development	16	5.3
Trainer	17	3.7	Management Development	10	3.3
Staff Development	10	2.2	Development	9	3.0
HRD	9	1.9	HRD	8	2.7
HR Development	8	1.7	Staff Development	6	2.0
Development	8	1.7	HR	6	2.0
Personnel & Development	7	1.5	HR & Training	5	1.7
Other	114	24.6	Other	109	36.3

Table C: Comparison of Top 10 Public & Private Sector Titles 1996-7 & 2003-4

<i>Public Sector</i>			<i>Private Sector</i>		
Title	n.	%	Title	n.	%
Training	54	19	Training	128	27.9
Training & Development	46	16.2	Training & Development	84	18.3
Personnel and Training	20	7.0	Personnel and Training	28	6.1
Learning & Development	16	5.6	Management Development	22	4.8
Staff Development	15	5.3	Learning & Development	18	3.9
Organisation Development	11	3.9	Trainer	14	3.1
HRD	10	3.5	Organisation Development	10	2.2
Development	9	3.2	HRD	8	1.7
Management Development	7	2.5	Development	8	1.7
Employee Development	5	1.8	Management Training	7	1.5
Other	91	34.5	Other	131	27.3
Total	284	100	Total	458	100

Table D: Comparison of HRD/Training Function Tasks 1996-7 & 2003-4

Tasks Specified 1996-7	n.	%	Tasks Specified 2003-4	n.	%
Training	334	72.1	Training	172	57.3
Management of T&D	170	36.7	HRD	101	33.7
Management/ Leadership development	106	22.9	Management of T&D	90	30.0
Personnel	91	19.7	Management of people	44	14.7
Consultancy	77	16.6	Consultancy	38	12.7
Policy/Strategy	58	12.5	Personnel	34	11.3
Management of people	51	11.0	Change Management	30	10.0
Change Management	40	8.6	Organisation Development	30	10.0
HRD	40	8.6	Learning	27	9.0
Skills development	37	8.0	Management/ Leadership development	20	6.7
Administration	24	5.2	Policy/Strategy	19	6.3
Organisation Development	16	3.5	Research	10	3.3
Research	15	3.2	Administration	9	3.0
Learning	14	3.0	Skills development	7	2.3

Table E: Expertise & Experience Overall

Expertise	n.	%
Training & development	428	56.1
Sector knowledge	302	39.6
Training & development delivery	215	28.2
Training & development design	206	27.0
Working with managers	124	16.3
Management	117	15.3
HRD	109	14.3
Working with senior managers	98	12.8
Organisation and planning skills	96	12.6
Change management	82	10.7
T & Development evaluation	81	10.6
Competency frameworks	66	8.7
Project management	60	7.9
T & D strategy	55	7.2
Coaching	41	5.4
Organisation Development	40	5.2
Legislation	29	3.8
Strategy development	25	3.3
Psychometrics	18	2.4
Training & development policy	14	1.8

Table F: Comparison of Public & Private Sector Expertise/Experience

Expertise/Experience					
Public Sector			Private Sector		
Type	n.	%	Type	n.	%
Training & development	154	54.2	Training & development	262	57.2
Sector knowledge	83	29.2	Sector knowledge	214	46.7
Training design	81	28.5	Training delivery	132	28.8
Training delivery	81	28.5	Training design	123	26.9
Management	59	20.8	Working with managers	84	18.3
Organisation & planning skills	45	15.8	HRD	66	14.4
HRD	38	13.4	Working with senior managers	63	13.8
Working with managers	38	13.4	Management	55	12.0
Change management	33	11.6	T&D Evaluation	51	11.1
Working with senior managers	32	11.3	Organisation and planning skills	50	10.9
T&D Evaluation	30	10.6	Competency frameworks	47	10.3
T & D strategy	28	9.9	Change management	46	10.0
Competency frameworks	19	6.7	Project management	41	9.0
Project management	19	6.7	Coaching	35	7.6
Organisation Development	19	6.7	T&D Strategy	27	5.9
Legislation	17	6.0	Organisation Development	17	3.7
Strategy development	10	3.5	Psychometrics	15	3.3
T & D policy	7	2.5	Strategy development	14	3.1
Coaching	5	1.8	Legislation	12	2.6
Psychometrics	2	0.7	T & D policy	7	1.5

Table G: Comparison of Expertise/Experience Specified in HRD/Training Posts

Expertise/Experience					
1996-7			2003-4		
Type	n.	%	Type	n.	%
Training & development	306	66.1	Training & development	122	40.7
Sector knowledge	198	42.8	Sector knowledge	104	34.7
Training & development delivery	120	25.9	Training & development design	95	31.7
Training & development design	111	24.0	Training & development delivery	95	31.7
Working with managers	75	16.2	HRD	76	25.3
Management	59	12.7	Management	58	19.3
Working with senior managers	52	11.2	Working with managers	49	16.3
Organisation and planning skills	49	10.6	Organisation and planning skills	47	15.7
Competency frameworks	45	9.7	Working with senior managers	46	15.3
Change management	41	8.9	T&D Evaluation	42	14.0
T&D evaluation	39	8.4	Change management	41	13.7
HRD	33	7.1	Project management	34	11.3
Project management	26	5.6	Coaching	29	9.7
Training & development strategy	26	5.6	Training & development strategy	29	9.7
Legislation	19	4.1	Organisation Development	25	8.3
Organisation Development	15	3.2	Competency frameworks	21	7.0
Strategy development	14	3.0	Strategy development	11	3.7
Psychometrics	12	2.6	Legislation	10	3.3
Coaching	12	2.6	Training & development policy	8	2.7
Training & development policy	6	1.3	Psychometrics	6	2.0

Table H: Qualities 1996-7 & 2003-4

Qualities		
Type	n.	%
communication skills	220	28.8
Influencing	141	18.5
creativity & innovativeness	126	16.5
energy & drive	106	13.9
interpersonal skills	93	12.2
presentation skills	80	10.5
Flexibility	74	9.7
relationship building skills	65	8.5
facilitation skills	58	7.6
Proactive	47	6.2
hands-on approach	38	5.0
consultancy skills	37	4.8
building networks	32	4.2
Motivational	29	3.8
strategic thinking	25	3.3
Leadership	24	3.1
analytical ability	20	2.6
Vision	20	2.6
problem solving	6	0.8
understanding human behaviour	2	0.3

Table I: Comparison of Salary by Sector

Salaries						
Type	Sector	n.	%	Salary Min. £	Salary Max. £	Salary Mean £
Health	Public	56	7.8	14200	50000	28019
Emergency Services	Public	33	4.6	12000	51519	24557
Local Authority	Public	67	9.3	16587	60000	28249
Civil Service	Public	31	4.3	14000	75000	30305
Voluntary & Other	Public	17	2.4	13257	39000	26471
Education	Public	37	5.1	14317	45000	28008
Private	Private	457	63.6	12000	70000	31250
Not stated	Not stated	21	2.9	18000	75000	31504

Table J: Sector Comparison of Salary Mean 1996-7 & 2003-4 (£)

Salaries 1996-7 & 2003-4 Compared			
Sector	Salary Mean £		Increase
	1996-7	2003-4	%
Health	21294	32222	51.3%
Emergency Services	21271	26693	25.2%
Local Authority	22776	32178	41.2%
Civil Service	20782	33768	62.5%
Education	25021	32060	28.1%
Voluntary & Other	21656	29656	36.9%
Private	28395	37989	33.8%
not stated	27580	35429	28.5%

Table K: Location of HRD/Training Posts

Location of Posts		
Area	n.	%
London	212	27.8
South East	159	20.8
South West	83	10.9
North East	32	4.2
North West	69	9.0
Midlands	109	14.3
Wales	7	0.9
Scotland	24	3.1
Ireland	1	0.1
Various	34	4.5
Elsewhere	5	0.7
Not stated	28	3.7

Table L: Diversity, IiP, External Contractors & E-Learning Compared by Sector

Sector Type	Posts		Diversity		IiP		Contractors		E-Learning	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Health	56	7.3	1	1.8	10	17.9	2	3.6	0	0.0
Emergency Services	33	4.3	2	6.1	5	15.2	2	6.1	1	3.0
Local Authority	67	8.8	12	17.9	20	29.9	9	13.4	5	7.5
Education	37	4.8	5	13.5	1	2.7	3	8.1	1	2.7
Civil Service	31	4.1	3	9.7	8	25.8	7	22.6	1	3.2
Voluntary & Other	60	7.9	4	6.7	11	18.3	9	15.0	4	6.7
Private	458	60.0	14	3.1	43	9.4	38	8.3	9	2.0
Not stated	21	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.8	1	4.8

Table M: Focus of Posts Overall

Focus of Posts		
Type	n.	%
Operational	657	86.1
Both	68	8.9
Not Known	36	4.7
Strategic	2	0.3

Table N: Top 10 Designations 1996-7 & 2003-4

Designation	n.	%
Manager	270	35.4
Officer	156	20.4
Consultant	83	10.9
Adviser	59	7.7
Trainer	53	6.9
Head	29	3.8
Specialist	16	2.1
Coordinator	15	2.0
Professional	14	1.8
Executive	10	1.3
Other	58	7.6

ADDITIONAL SURVEY DATA

Table O: Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers

Table x: Feedback between HRD Function & Senior Managers

	NR	Strong Consistent & well Established	Moderate variable & loosely structured	Weak/ Non-existent
	%	%	%	%
Feedback 'Now'	2.3%	37.7%	53.4%	6.6%
Feedback 5 years ago	13.4%	6.9%	45.9%	33.8%

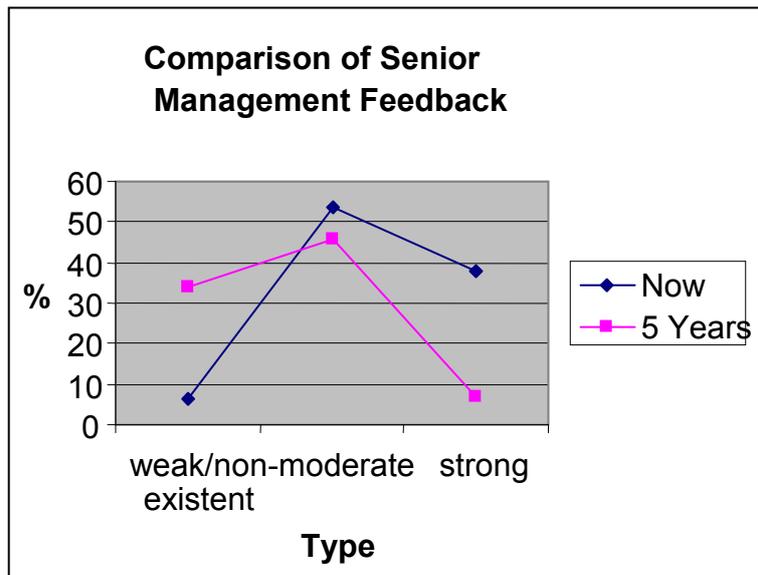


Figure A: Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers

Table P: Senior Managers' Feedback Now & Respondents' Job Title Cross-tabulated

Job title * feedback between function and senior managers now Crosstabulation

			feedback between function and senior managers now				Total
			NR	strong, consistent & well-established	moderate, variable & loosely structured	Weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	0	36	69	3	108
		% within Job title	.0%	33.3%	63.9%	2.8%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	43	52	7	102
		% within Job title	.0%	42.2%	51.0%	6.9%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	7	36	42	10	95
		% within Job title	7.4%	37.9%	44.2%	10.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	115	163	20	305
		% within Job title	2.3%	37.7%	53.4%	6.6%	100.0%

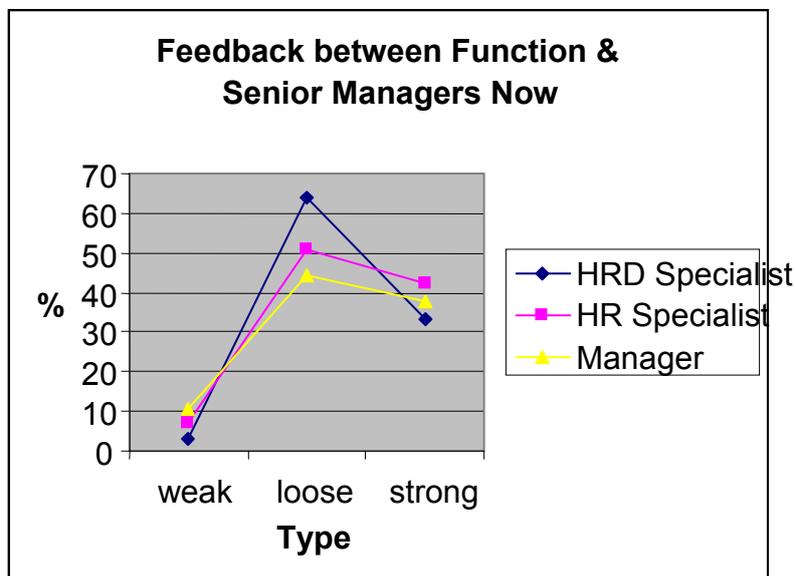


Figure B: Feedback between HRD/Training Function & Senior Managers Now Cross-tabulated with Job Title

Table Q: Senior Managers' Feedback 5 Years Ago & Respondents' Job Title Cross-tabulated

Job title * feedback between function and senior managers 5 years ago Crosstabulation

			feedback between function and senior managers 5 years ago				Total
			NR	strong, consistent & well-established	moderate, variable & loosely structured	Weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	6	7	49	46	108
		% within Job title	5.6%	6.5%	45.4%	42.6%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	12	8	52	30	102
		% within Job title	11.8%	7.8%	51.0%	29.4%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	23	6	39	27	95
		% within Job title	24.2%	6.3%	41.1%	28.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	41	21	140	103	305	
	% within Job title	13.4%	6.9%	45.9%	33.8%	100.0%	

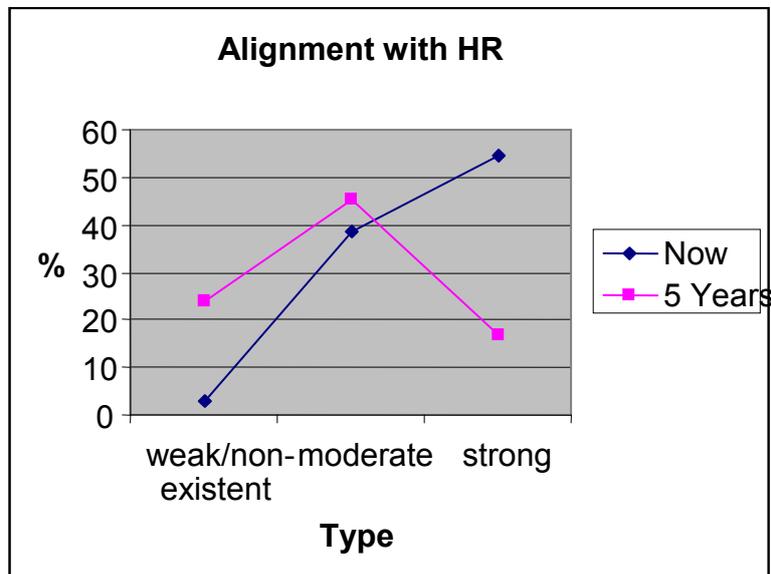


Figure C: Alignment between HRD/Training & HR Functions

Table R: Alignment between HRD/Training & HR Functions Now

Job title * alignment and partnership between function and HR now Crosstabulation

			alignment and partnership between function and HR now				Total
			NR	strong, consistent and active	moderate, loosely structured and variable	weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	1	52	52	3	108
		% within Job title	.9%	48.1%	48.1%	2.8%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	0	67	34	1	102
		% within Job title	.0%	65.7%	33.3%	1.0%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	12	47	31	5	95
		% within Job title	12.6%	49.5%	32.6%	5.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	13	166	117	9	305
		% within Job title	4.3%	54.4%	38.4%	3.0%	100.0%

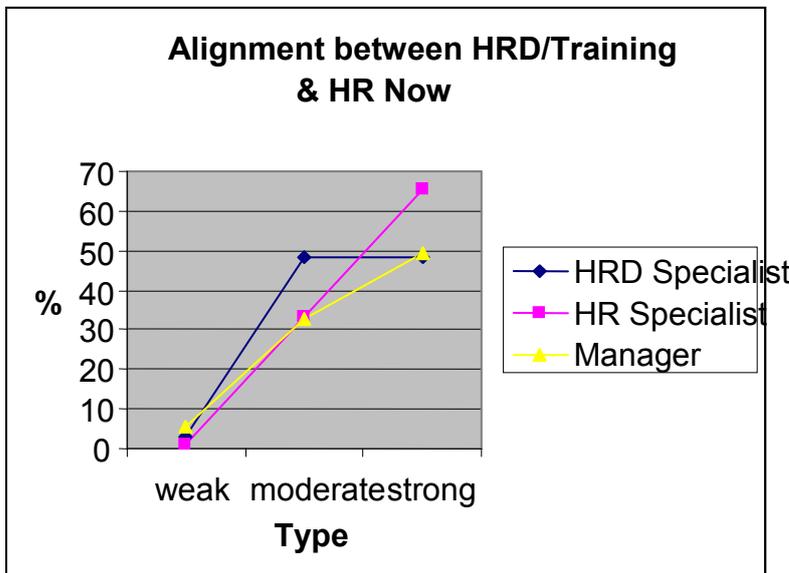


Figure D: HRD/Training & HR Alignment Now

Table S: Alignment between HRD/Training & HR Functions 5 Years Ago

Job title * alignment and partnership between function and HR 5 years ago Crosstabulation

			alignment and partnership between function and HR 5 years ago				Total
			NR	strong, consistent and active	moderate, loosely structured and variable	weak/non-existent	
Job title	HRD Specialist	Count	9	16	47	36	108
		% within Job title	8.3%	14.8%	43.5%	33.3%	100.0%
	HR Specialist	Count	9	20	50	23	102
		% within Job title	8.8%	19.6%	49.0%	22.5%	100.0%
	Manager	Count	25	15	41	14	95
		% within Job title	26.3%	15.8%	43.2%	14.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	43	51	138	73	305
		% within Job title	14.1%	16.7%	45.2%	23.9%	100.0%



Human Resource Development/Training Function Survey

Please fill in this questionnaire if you work in a HRD/training function or have a managerial role. Unless stated otherwise please answer by ticking the appropriate box

Section 1: Your Organisation and Your Role

1. What is the name of the organisation for which you work? *Example: Essex social services, the Metropolitan Police Service, Warwick University.*

.....

2. What is your job title? *Example: Training Officer; Learning and Development Consultant, Team Manager*

.....

3. In your organisation, to whom does the Head of the HRD/training and development report?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Head of Personnel/Human Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management Board | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Head of Central/Corporate Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| CEO or Permanent Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For the following three questions please rate each of the following items on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1= not at all, 2= a little, 3= moderate amount, 4= significant amount, 5= great amount, ? = don't know.

4. To what extent have the following formed part of the HRD/training function's work in your organisation?

	Now						5 Years Ago					
	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Investors in People	<input type="checkbox"/>											
E-learning technology	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Diversity and inclusivity.....	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Working with external contractors.....	<input type="checkbox"/>											

5. Has the role of the HRD/training function become 'more strategic' over the past 5 years?

	1	2	3	4	5	?
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

If you ticked Box 1 for Question 5, please skip Question 6 and move to Question 7.

6. If it has become 'more strategic', has this change strengthened the status of the HRD/training function within your organisation?

	1	2	3	4	5	?
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

7. Which of the following would help the HRD/training function strengthen its status? Please tick all the boxes that apply.

- making its role more clear and explicit
- only employing professionally qualified staff
- having greater access to and more visible support from top management
- direct reporting line to CEO/Permanent Secretary
- stronger partnership with HR/Personnel function
- stronger partnership with managers
- demonstrating specialist and exclusive knowledge and expertise
- demonstrating a more 'evidence-based'/research based approach to its work
- demonstrating more organisation development & change management expertise
- demonstrating links between its role and performance improvement
- nothing can improve its status/image
- other (please state below)

Section 2: The role and structure of HRD/training function

8. Which of the following statements best describe your HRD/training function? Please mark one of three options in each of the two columns, 'Now', & '5' years ago'.

a. The HRD function and line managers have:	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
A strong, consistent & active partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A loosely structured & variable partnership.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A weak/no working partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b. Feedback between HRD function & senior managers is:	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Strong, consistent & well-established	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate, variable & loosely structured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weak/non-existent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

c. Top management support for HRD/training function is:	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Strong, consistent and active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate, intermittent and variable.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weak/non-existent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

d. Alignment and partnership between HRM and HRD/training functions is:	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Strong, consistent & active.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate, loosely structured and variable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weak/non-existent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

e. The HRD/training function:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Helps shape & support corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supports corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Works independently of corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

f. HRD/training goals, policies and plans are:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Long term focused and well structured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short term focused and loosely structured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weak/non-existent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

g. HRD/training goals, policies and plans are:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Strongly aligned with corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loosely aligned with corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weakly/not aligned with corporate strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

h. HRD/training function scans environment for & is responsive to opportunities & threats:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

i. Stakeholders see HRD/training function mainly as:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
HRD/training delivery expert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrator of HRD/training events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic, organisation development expert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

j. HRD/training function undertakes evaluations:

	<i>Now</i>	<i>5 years ago</i>
At level of individual reaction to development events e.g. course assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrequently & in ad hoc way/never	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently at level of individual learning, transfer of learning & organisational impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Status of HRD Function & Profession

9. Please rank from 1-10 the following organisational functions according to the four criteria at the top of each column. '1' is the highest and '10' is the lowest rank.

Example: take a look at each column in turn, ask yourself 'people in which type of work in our organisation have the most 'Career Advancement Potential' '; you might decide on 'IT'. Give '1' to 'IT', '2' to your second choice, and so on, ending with a score of '10' for the function with the least 'Career Advancement Potential'. Repeat this entire procedure with each of the other three criteria/columns, 'Level of Qualification', 'Power and Influence over People, and 'Value to the Organisation'.

	career advancement potential	level of qualifications	power & influence over people	value to organisation
Legal Services				
Finance				
HR/Personnel				
HRD/Training				
Corporate Planning				
Communications services				
CEOs office/Private Office				
Policy work				
Information technology (IT)				
Procurement & estate management				

10. Please rank from 1-10 the following occupations according to each of the four criteria at the top of each column. '1' is the highest and '10' as the lowest rank.

	standard of living	level of qualifications	power & influence over people	value to society
University lecturer				
Office cleaner				
Doctor				
HR/Personnel Practitioner				
Accountant				
Porter				
HRD/training Practitioner				
Nursing Practitioner				
Physiotherapist				
School teacher				

Section 4: Information about you

11. Are you: Male Female

12. What qualifications do you hold?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Certificate/diploma..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | HR/HRD/training qualification..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management qualification | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Masters | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical qualification..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Doctorate..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state)..... | |

- Please tick this box if you would be happy to be contacted for a follow-up discussion.
- Please tick the box if you would like to receive a summary of the survey results.

Your name and contact details please (if you have ticked either of the boxes above).

Name
Organisation
Address
.....
Telephone Number
E-mail Address

We thank you very much for completing this form. Please send your completed form to R. Auluck-Cooper, CMPS, Strategy Group, Larch Avenue, Sunningdale Park, SL5 0QE or e-mail to randhir@le-mot-juste.com