

# The historical development of human resource development in the United Kingdom

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## **The history of human resource development in the United Kingdom**

### **Abstract**

We construct the historical development of training and development through to current notions of HRD within the United Kingdom (UK). This includes reference to multiple stakeholders, such as governments, employing organizations, academics and professional bodies, and their influences including national policy interventions and legislation shaping academic and professional practices and qualifications. We identify numerous factors, which we have clustered into two broad dimensions: the national (macro) context and operational (micro) practice context. We conclude that HRD as a concept and a term to describe an area of academic study and professional practice has had variable impact in different sites of practice. This variability probably but not certainly reflects the interests; material and social; of the differing stakeholders dominating discourse in those sites.

### **Key words**

Training & development, HRD, United Kingdom, government, national policy, professional, academic, context

### **Introduction**

Our aim is to 'construct' (Callahan, 2010) the historical development of training and development through to current notions of HRD within the United Kingdom (UK). This includes reference to multiple stakeholders, such as governments, employing organizations, academics and professional bodies, and their influences including government interventions in the form of legislation and shaping of practices and professional qualifications. We recognize the relationships between individuals, occupations, organisations and society (the

state), and how the concept of HRD might have emerged to integrate the needs of each of these (Stead & Lee 1996:61).

In reviewing the historical development of HRD in the UK, we identified numerous factors, which we have clustered into two broad dimensions: the national (macro) context and operational (micro) practice context. However, we are mindful and remind readers of the interconnections between each. The national context includes: the changing political landscape manifest through national government policy factors; shifts in academic thinking; and the evolving professional landscape. The operational practice context includes: the purpose(s) of HRD (located in what has been constructed as the performance v learning debate); practices and roles; and paradigms. HRD is both a practical activity performed in work organisations, and an academic subject area theorised about in knowledge-creating organisations (universities), and we review the historical development of, and connections between, both of these.

### **National Context**

First, we review the changing political landscape manifest through national government policy factors. Then we examine shifts in academic thinking; and then we consider the evolving professional landscape.

#### *National policy context*

We can only summarise and provide an overall picture of national policy. There have been many reports commissioned and written about the UK national training system from a Royal Commission report titled 'Report on Technical Instruction in Great Britain', published in 1884 to the 'Leitch Review of Skills'

published in 2006. Such reports are commissioned by governments and are used as the basis for their policies in relation to what is variously referred to as Vocational Education and Training (VET) and National HRD (NHRD) (eg MSC/DES 1986). Both terms refer to HRD efforts at national level directed by governments and their agencies. The nature of VET policies can be characterised as being either 'interventionist' or 'voluntarist' and an examination of UK history indicates that since the 1884 report neither has been attempted in pure, undiluted form but that different governments controlled by different political parties have all combined both with varying emphasis on one or the other (see Stewart, 2010; Stewart and Rigg, 2011). It may be an oversimplification but in general governments of the 'right'; typically with the Conservative party in power; have emphasised the operation of the market and so voluntarism, while governments of the 'left'; typically with the Labour party in power; have emphasised interventionism. But, VET/NHRD has never been a focus of great differences between political parties and has not featured strongly in election campaigns. A debatable exception to this might be the increase in tuition fees for undergraduate higher education introduced by the present (i.e. at the time of writing in 2011) UK coalition government but the principle of fees is not challenged. The evidence of continuity in policy following elections suggests in fact a high degree of consensus between political parties in relation to VET/NHRD (Stewart and Rigg, 2011).

A central feature of this consensus is acceptance of and agreement on a set of causal relationships along the following lines. There is a direct link between levels of skills in the population and national economic performance. There is

similarly a direct link between investment in and amounts of VET/HRD activity and level of skills in the population. And, these same links exist at the level of the firm/organisation. Therefore, according to this argument, increasing investment in and amount of VET/HRD activity will increase the level of skills in the population and so the economic performance of firms/organisations and of the nation (cf. the 1964 Industrial Training Act, the New Training Initiative 1981 (DOE 1981, MSC 1981) and the 'learning age 1998 policy statement (DfEE 1988)). This syllogism illustrates the consensus view that investment in training and development to produce skills is justified primarily on economic grounds. And so, development of skills has the purpose of improving economic and financial performance of the nation and of firms/organisations. This focus on economic and financial factors is continued in the major question for governments and national policy which is, who invests by paying for HRD and in what proportions? Three possibilities are usually posited; government, employers or individuals. This is slightly misleading as governments are in large part funded by taxes paid by employers and individuals and so those two always pay. But, the point of the government funding activity is that it removes the choice of investing in skills, or not, from employers and individuals. The UK has over the last hundred years or so tried many variations in levels of government funding and many policy interventions to either require or to encourage employers and/or individuals to invest and pay more by spending more on HRD activities. Interventions have been targeted at supply side factors and actors such as education and training providers; for example a major change in vocational qualification structures in the 1980s (DOE/DE 1986, ED 1988). This initiative was launched in 1986 with the establishment of the National Council for

Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), and has led in the intervening years to most jobs and occupations having qualifications based on assessment of competence and known as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), (Stewart & Sambrook 1985). This did originally encompass the professions, including HR with NVQs developed for both personnel and, separately, training and development. However, NVQs at professional and managerial levels have not fully replaced the extant professional academic qualifications (Walton et al 1995). More recently, demand side factors and actors have become more significant in government policy; e.g. stimulating employer investment through the Investors in People (IiP) initiative. The continuous and continuing preoccupation with raising skills levels to improve national economic performance has seen a plethora of policies, structures, agencies and initiatives come and go in the UK as successive governments of all political persuasions have sought to find an effective formula for VET/NHRD; i.e. to 'get it right'. That same continuous and continuing preoccupation would though perhaps suggest that either the shared assumptions detailed at the start of this paragraph are flawed and/or that it is not possible to 'get it right'. Perhaps these are two lessons of history that are not in anyone's interests to be learned.

An interesting observation we can make based on the evidence available on VET/NHRD in the UK is that the term HRD is rarely used by governments or their agencies (see Stewart and Rigg, 2011, for a brief history detailing the major agencies). The latest agency to be created by a UK government is the UK Council for Employment and Skills (UKCES). This agency had no direct predecessor but absorbed some purposes and functions of a number of agencies abolished at the

time UKCES itself was created in 2007. As such, it also created an archive of publications from the abolished agencies to which has been added many scores of more recent publications; research reports, policy briefings, annual reports etc; that the UKCES has itself produced since it was established four years ago. The archive therefore holds thousand of publications. A recent search of the archive (1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011) using 'HRD' as an exact search term produced 19 results. A similar search using Human Resource Development produced 33 results, not surprisingly encompassing the 19 items in the results for HRD. Four items in each list of results were reports and papers written by one of the present authors and appeared because of his job title; Professor of HRD; and/or because of his brief biography included in the reports or papers. A search using the word 'Skills' produced over 5,000 results. And, a search using the exact phrase 'economic performance' produced over 100 results; many more than HRD or Human Resource Development; and many publications combining that phrase with 'skills' in their titles. So, it is safe to argue that at national level and for governments and their agencies, the terms HRD and Human Resource Development have not made an impact in the UK. It may also be safe to argue that 'skills' is the focus of what constitutes HRD at national level in the UK rather than any other conception of development. And so that a performative view of what we and others term HRD has and does dominate the thinking and policy of UK VET/NHRD.

### *Academic context*

Having briefly reviewed the national context, next we turn to academic attempts to define HRD. A key question is whether HRD is indeed different from training

and development, or whether it is merely a new label. However, as an Employment Department project revealed, in an attempt to define what academics and employees meant by the term 'training,' 'training' seems to have a 'negative connotation' and there appears to be a 'fuzzy boundary' between 'education' and 'training' (ED 1994:1). British academics and practitioners have debated whether terms such as HRM and HRD describe new concepts or are merely new labels for existing concepts, the idea of old wine in new bottles (Armstrong 1987), for example.

Some claim, 'the field of human resource development defies definition and boundaries,' (Blake 1995:22). Some refuse to define it, arguing, 'I can't define it sufficiently to satisfy myself, let alone others,' (Lee 1998:3). From its argued roots in OD, 'the emergence and spread of HRD was chaotic, random, blind, and serendipitous - pure empiricism,' (Blake 1995:22). As Blake (1995) also states, 'The language of human resource development is a source of insight into the evolution of the field - and serves as a measure of HRD's spread. Many words began with HRD specialists and have crept into everyday language.' Blake cites phrases such as 'change agent' and 'hidden agenda,' which started at the Tavistock Clinic in London. It is interesting to consider where the phrase 'HRD' came from. Blake (1995) thinks usage of the phrase began during World War Two. He continues, 'Around the 1970s, the phrase 'human resource' became the umbrella term used for everything now known as human resource issues, including selection.. and development ... I think it was Leonard Nadler [an American]... who brought the term human resource into being,' (Blake 1995). However, this is not quite accurate as the term 'human resource development'



was in established usage in (national economic) development studies as illustrated by a 1964 publication by Harbison and Myers (1964). This adds an interesting twist to the UK national HRD context since, and as we showed above, HRD does not figure there despite one of its origins being the very focus of UK NHRD.

In the UK, 'HRD is a relatively new concept which has yet to become fully established, either within professional practice or as a focus of academic enquiry,' (Stewart and McGoldrick 1996:1). From a review of the UK literature, academics only began to grapple with the concept from the late 1980s. For example, in 1986, Abrahams referred to 'Human Resource Development Suppliers' in Mumford (1986:427). In 1989, MacKay offered '35 Checklists for Human Resource Development.' Stewart (1989) referred to HRD in his article offering an organisational change framework. Later, to help overcome confusions and misunderstandings, Stewart (1992) suggested a collaborative approach towards developing a model of HRD. Hendry, Jones and Pettigrew (1990) reported to the Training Agency on HRD in small-to-medium sized enterprises. In his discussion of corporate strategy and training, Hendry (1991) refers to the training versus HRD debate. HRD had 'arrived' in the UK. Yet, as Lee explains, "HRD" in the UK is presented as diverse and in a state of flux... In the UK, HRD is seen as a relatively young and predominantly Western concept which has emerged from management and development thinking, and has been shaped by values and events as Europe has transformed over the last 50 years,' (1998:528).

The term 'HRD' utilises the concepts of *human resources* and *development*. Elliott describes her difficulty in working to the concept of HRD in that, 'when trying to understand the word "development" alone, much confusion arises because the different interpretations of this word... Equally, my understanding of what is meant by "Human Resources" is likely to differ from any one else's due to my own value base and view of life,' (1998:536). The use of the term 'human resources' is variable, as Oxtoby and Coster (1992) point out. Oxtoby criticises the word *resource* being used to describe people, but this is already the case with HRM. Coster acquiesces that the term HRD is used in practice and is here to stay, and therefore needs to be adopted. 'The combination of these three words in the term human resource development simply adds to the confusion and results in a variety of interpretations,' (Elliott 1998:536). In her review of the literature, Elliott explains, 'there are no shibboleths of HRD, no pillars of seminal texts which I could quickly look up to and declare with certainty that these are *the* texts which have been influential in shaping HRD theory and practice in the UK. The picture is much more undefined than that, consisting of many fuzzy and indistinct areas with no recognisable boundaries,' (1998:536). Where does training and development end and HRD begin, or where does HRD end and management begin? Rosemary Harrison (1993) suggested that many trainers find the phrase 'human resource development' difficult to accept, preferring the 'softer' phrases such as 'employee development' or 'training and development.' In her later text, Harrison revealed that the title 'Employee Development' had to be used to conform with publishing requirements, when she would have rather used the term HRD (Harrison 1997:xiv). She explained that HRD encompasses more than just employee development, extending its scope to include non-

employees, referring to Walton (1996), and a broader range of stakeholders (Harrison 1997:1, 19).

Despite this difficulty, the term was being swiftly taken up in British academic institutions. Iles (1994) referred to the emergence of 'Chairs' in HRD (he was one of the first). Later, Sambrook and Stewart (1998) referred to two Professors of, and two Readers, in HRD, and educational programmes such as Masters programmes, and NVQs, in HRD have appeared. In their work, designed to support MBA programmes in the UK, Megginson et al (1993) put the 'economic case' for HRD. This was a discursive tool, using rhetoric to build an argument for T&D in 'managerial' language. It is interesting to note, however, that the (then) Institute of Personnel and Development's professional diploma (their highest level qualification) was entitled '*Training Management*' and the core textbook barely referred to HRD (Marchington & Wilkinson 1996). Conversely, Stewart and McGoldrick (1996) intended, through their work, to help establish HRD as an area of academic study. As Lee stated, 'Given that the organisational world is increasingly adopting views propounded by SHRD theorists, further attention to strengthening the conceptual base of HRD would help legitimate SHRD as an academic discipline,' (1997:92). Lee also argued that, 'a exploration of the concept of "strategic human resource development" shows it to be functionally important, yet difficult to define,' (1997:92).

Yet, as Moorby suggests, 'Understanding the language used is becoming increasingly important in the field of management and HRD,' (1996:4). We argue that these debates show how HRD is a social and discursive construction

(Sambrook 1998). This shift can be described as the 'linguistic turn' reflected in the discursive swing from training to learning, or 'learning turn' (Holmes 2004). As Fairclough explains, 'Discourses do not just reflect or present social entities and relations, they construct and constitute them,' (1992:3). In this sense, HRD – and strategic HRD - has been talked into being, and can easily be talked out of being (Walton 2003).

A significant influence on the development of HRD education at the strategic level has been provided by The University Forum for HRD (UFHRD) formerly named the Euston Road Consortium and established in 1992. This is an independent network established to promote the subject of HRD, undertake collaborative research to develop our understanding of the field, and achieve an integrated qualifications structure in this area (see Stewart, et al, 2009, for a brief history). The body originally represented Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), non-University NVQ Centres, NCVQ, the Open University Validation Service and the Association of Business Schools, and was financially supported by the IPD. The Forum members - now almost exclusively university representatives - collaborate on developing professional, academic and competence programmes in the HRD arena, established EURESFORM; a European body with similar aims; and has forged strong links with the American Academy for HRD, as well as retaining links with what is now the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Seminal research by the Forum for the (then) UK government Employment Department examined ways in which academic, professional and competence-based programmes in HRD might articulate (Walton et al 1995). In a survey of all providers, the

authors report that 56 higher education institutions (HEIs) provide training and development qualifications, either as Masters degrees in HRD, or as part of educational or occupational psychology degrees. Of the 28 HEI respondents, one half (14) provide academic programmes in HRD (Walton et al 1995). All of the University Forum for HRD members provide NVQs and/or academic programmes in HRD.

In 1995, the University Forum for HRD consulted with representatives from industry to produce a 'framework' statement defining HRD (UFHRD unpublished). The statement draws upon the discourse of strategy, referring to objectives, plan, and position, in addition to the government driven discourse of competences. The statement has not been formally revisited or revised by the Forum but its many activities and sponsored/supported publications since 1995 indicate some shifts in position, although essential features of its views on HRD remain; e.g. HRD as being distinct from HRM (see McGoldrick et al, 2001). The UFHRD has played a major role in establishing HRD as an academic subject and in shaping education of professional practitioners up to and including the present. This has been achieved by fostering and supporting research projects on HRD practice and associated outputs, organising national and international seminars and conferences and a recent return to a focus on curriculum design and learning and teaching in HRD qualification programmes (Stewart, et al, 2009).

### *Professional context*

The term HRD had a perhaps inauspicious start in the UK as far as professional bodies and their qualifications were concerned. The then professional body for development practitioners, the Institute of Training and Development (ITD), considered a change of name in the early nineties to use the term HRD but experienced opposition from a significant portion of their membership. This sparked a debate in 1992 in the pages of the Institute's journal on the appropriateness or otherwise of the term. As noted above, Barry Oxtoby, an opponent of the term and at the time a leading and influential practitioner through his work on applying the ideas of the learning company/learning organisation at Rover Group (a then UK automotive manufacturer) argued strongly in one of those articles that 'human *resource* development' demeaned the status and importance of employees. Staff at Oxtoby's company were not even referred to as 'employees'. Others though argued the need to recognise movements in both academia and in the practice of many organisations. In both cases, the term 'human resources' was overtaking alternatives such as personnel and training and development.

The ITD had other business on its agenda around this time (early to mid 1990s) which meant that a change of name and the appropriateness or otherwise of the term HRD became of less pressing importance. More significant developments were associated with training and qualifying development professionals. The ITD had established itself as the qualifying body for professional development practitioners through its Certificate and Diploma qualifications, delivered mainly but not exclusively through what were then polytechnics but which are now

universities. Two related matters concerned the Institute in relation to its qualifications. The first was associated with UK government policy in relation to vocational education and development described earlier and which was directed at reshaping vocational and professional qualifications. The ITD had at least two interests in this new policy. The first was the obvious one of how it would impact on and affect its own qualifications. The second was the key role that ITD members as development professionals and representatives of employers would play in implementing the policy and in developing the new framework, system and associated new qualifications. The Institute adopted a fully supportive stance in relation to the policy and was an early mover in establishing processes necessary to develop the new competence based approach for its own qualifications. It also invested time, money and effort in supporting its members and others in adopting the new approach.

The second and related matter occupying the ITD was continuing professional development for its members. The established Certificate and Diploma qualifications had been successful and had produced significant numbers of qualified practitioners. The Institute therefore wished to promote provision of higher level qualifications for the growing number of Diploma level qualified members. It could not itself though award qualifications at a higher level and so had to work with and through universities to develop masters' level awards for CPD purposes. Two factors made the early nineties a good time to launch such an initiative. The first was that the polytechnics, which were established providers of programmes leading to the ITD Certificate and Diploma, became universities in 1992. This was not a necessary condition but made it easier for those

educational institutions to develop and provide masters' level awards 'approved' by the ITD. The second factor was the need to revise and develop new Certificate and Diploma programmes and qualifications in response to the UK government policy. And so, a retired academic named Alan Moon was recruited to lead projects for the ITD to support universities in both changing Certificate and Diploma qualification programmes to reflect government policy on competence based assessment, and in developing new masters' level programmes and awards. Alan Moon was a crucial figure in establishing HRD in the UK (see McGoldrick, et al, 2005). Whatever the varying views of ITD members on the name of the Institute, Alan played a key role in the adoption of the term HRD in ITD and masters' level qualifications in UK universities. A significant manifestation of the use of the term HRD by ITD was in its annual conference which in 1984 became known as 'HRD Week', a name which is still used today. However, outside of approved qualifications awarded by universities and in the vocational qualifications discussed above, the term HRD has only recently been adopted in professional qualifications.

The former Institutes of Training and Development (ITD) and Personnel Management (IPM) were merged in 1994 to create the combined professional body, the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) which is the largest such body in Europe (Reid & Barrington 1994:170). This became Chartered in 2001. 'This merger was a good illustration of the 'desire for integration' prevalent across the UK. It also reflected the increasing unease that theoreticians and practitioners had with the difficult-to-sustain historical dichotomy between HRD and HRM,' (Lee 1998:532). This suggests that both academics and practitioners



identified the need to integrate their closely related practices, and present a united front for all aspects related to employment management, perhaps in response to the growing critique of personnel management (conflict, ambiguity) and training and development (irrelevant, knee-jerk). However, in the newly created and entitled body, there was no reference to human resources, nor their strategic use. Indeed, in a survey of training professionals, some claim it was a take-over. A development specialist stated that,

‘The IPD is much more focused on personnel issues to the extent that it has been more like a take-over of the ITD than a merger. The old IPM structure is still there and it is a great shame that the higher-level training diploma in management has disappeared. Even the word “training” is no longer in the IPD name ... Twenty years ago, training was seen as marginal and now there is a risk it will happen again. The structure of the IPD professional standards ... reflects the old IPM attitude that they were a higher-level organisation... The IPD should not treat training and development as an add-on,’ (Training 1997:4).

On a similar note, a training executive noted that,

‘The ITD was growing and had a healthy bank balance while the IPM was in a poor financial situation. The IPM also had a “poor relation” attitude towards trainers and its qualification structure was stuffy and old-fashioned while the ITD had been in the vanguard of competency development and multi-route advancement,’ (Training 1997:4).

Another practitioner, head of a management training centre, stated that

'the merger suited my career path because I am no longer a front-line trainer... My job now has a much wider role with involvement in aspects of personnel and I am more interested in the longer-term strategic approach of the IPD. But for a dedicated trainer, there is less in the IPD than they may have got from the ITD ... it might only be 25 per cent relevant,' (Training 1997:4).

An HRD manager said that,

'Training and development is not far removed from personnel and the two need to work together... The IPD is much more professional now ... My job has now changed to a more senior level where I need to look at the broader areas of HR management. The IPD is a better product for more senior people in training. But I can see that, for more junior staff in both training and personnel, it may not be so good because it is not focusing on their area of responsibility,' (Training 1997:4).

On a more positive note, several practitioners commented that, for example, 'there was no common sense in having two similar bodies going along parallel line,' and the 'distinction between HR management and HR development is a false one ... Together they provide a unique set of skills which enhance the function strategically,' (Training 1997:4-5). Many referred to the differences between qualifications structures and membership entry requirements, suggesting the IPM was more aloof and exclusive, whereas the ITD was more inclusive, yet still professional. In its Professional Education Scheme, the IPD proposed four core elements to employment management (Marchington &

Wilkinson 1996) - employee resourcing, employee reward, employee development and employee relations. This crudely suggested training and development accounts for roughly a quarter of the remit of employment management. Partly in response to this and to the negative reactions from some to the merger, a new professional body for learning professionals was established a few years after the creation of the IPD. This body is named the Institute of Training and Occupational Learning (ITOL); again no mention or indication of HRD.

The current CIPD qualifications suggest and perhaps illustrate the ambivalent approach to HRD on the part of the former IPM and ITD and the merged body of IPD/CIPD. There are three levels to the current CIPD qualification structure; foundation, intermediate and advanced. At the first level the term 'Learning and Development' is used for qualifications and there are no modules/units making up those qualifications with the term HRD in their title and so at this level HRD does not appear at all. The term 'Learning and Development' was used in the immediately previous qualification structure and replaced the earlier Employee Development referred to above and so the foundation level seems to be a continuation of that policy. At intermediate level, certificate and diploma qualifications are available with name HRD although there is only one module/unit with HRD in the title. At the final advanced level HRD is similarly used in qualification titles but there is no module/unit with that term used in the title. So, for one level the term does not appear at all, at a second level it appears in qualification titles but only once in module titles and at the third level it appears in qualification titles but not at all in module titles. Thus, despite the

CIPD continuing the former ITD use of HRD in the annual HRD Week conference there remains ambivalence and ambiguity about the term in recognising professional practice through curriculum for and titles of professional qualifications awarded by the professional body.

Given that the current qualifications are based on and derived from what the CIPD call their 'HR Profession Map' it is worth saying more about that representation of practice. According to the CIPD website, 'The map is firmly rooted in the real world having been created with HR practitioners drawn from every size of organisation and across every sector' (<http://www.cipd.co.uk/cipd-hr-profession/hr-profession-map/explore-map.aspx>). This claim is clearly meant to convey the message that the HR Profession Map describes and reflects what happens in practice. If we take that message at face value then practice does not encompass HRD, or at least does not use the concept or term to represent practice. This follows because HRD is not used to describe or represent or account for any aspect of activity in the HR profession or the behaviours of HR professionals in any part of the map. So, it is either not surprising that HRD does not figure much in the CIPD qualification structure or it is surprising that it features at all. Perhaps that statement sums up the continuing ambivalence within professional practice towards the term in the UK.

This situation in relation to professional qualifications can be contrasted with the situation in academia. As noted above, there has been a steady increase in academic awards in HRD. The term has also been increasingly used in the titles of academic departments and titles of full Professors; there are currently

approximately 20 of the latter in UK universities from a base line of zero in the late 1980s Through the work of the UFHRD and its members there are also journals, academic conferences and many books featuring the term HRD in their titles. So, does this signal a separation of academic and professional interest? That may be possible. But, professional practitioners attend the academic programmes with HRD in their title and those same professionals do not seek or pursue academic careers. It is not known (to us at least) just how many graduates of HRD named awards there are in the UK but based on knowledge of universities providing programmes over the last two decades the number is likely to be at least 10,000. This may be one reason that CIPD qualifications feature HRD in their titles to some extent even though their professional map does not. And in addition, the annual UFHRD/AHRD European conference has regularly included a stream for practitioners which attract enough professionals to run; it did so in 2011 and no doubt will again in 2012. So, the situation is not as clear as it may first seem.

In summary, the history of HRD as far as professional practice is concerned has seen some separation from academia. It is clear that academia has led the use of and interest in HRD in the UK. It is also clear that bodies representing professional practitioners have been and remain ambivalent about the concept and the term. But, professional practitioners themselves presumably see some meaning and value in HRD otherwise the academic programmes would not have been successful and it is the success of those programmes which provided the foundation for the growth and associated success of the other academic artefacts

of research projects and publications, full professorial chairs and academic networks.

To summarise this section, we have sketched the historical development of HRD in the UK, shaped by national political, academic and professional initiatives and interventions. Next, we turn our attention to the operational and practice context.

### **Operational, practice context**

We now consider the purpose(s) of HRD (located in what has been constructed as the performance v learning debate); practices and roles; and paradigms.

#### *Purpose(s) of HRD*

An ongoing debate centres on the purpose(s) of HRD, and whether the focus should be on performance versus learning. Stewart (1998:9) suggests that, 'the practice of HRD is constituted by the deliberate, purposive and active interventions in the natural learning process. Such interventions can take many forms, most capable of categorizing as education or training or development.' Lee argues that 'true development is fostered by helping individuals to help themselves,' (1996:253). To understand the nature of HRD, and whether its purpose is learning and/or performance, we consider the relationship between HRM and HRD. This is not disputed - theoretically, there must be a relationship if UK academic literature purports that HRM is the strategic and integrated approach to managing and *developing* people (Guest 1989, Storey 1992, Rainbird 1994); professionally, with the merger of the two former institutes to

create the (now) Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD); and - empirically, 'development' units are usually located within the HR Directorate, and HRD Managers accountable to the Director of HR.

It is useful to examine some British academic models that refer explicitly to the relationship. Guest's normative 'theory' or model of HRM (Guest 1989) provides a framework for analysing the processes and practices within the HR Directorates, and attempt to identify where the development unit 'fits in' strategically. Guest's was one of the earliest British attempts to theorise HRM, and explain where training and development features within HRM. Training and development is highlighted as an obvious HR policy, but other areas of Guest's model are relevant to any discussions of HRD, such as change management, managing learning to enhance innovation, training to improve job performance, flexibility and quality and cultural change programmes through organisation development.

Sisson (1989) also explains how training is linked to HRM in three key areas. Without training, the HRM function has to resort to the external market for recruitment. With training, there is the incentive to develop complementary HRM to protect the investment, through sophisticated employee relations and rewards systems, for example. Finally, training provides symbolic value to employees of their worth to the organisation, thereby contributing to motivation and commitment. Keep (1989) identifies the amount of training and development as 'the main litmus test of whether HRM has made headway in the British context' (see also Storey 1992:111). However, it may not necessarily be

the amount of training that distinguishes personnel from HRM. Rather, it may well be the reasons for and methods of developing people, for example, more closely aligned with corporate strategies and business plans that distinguish HRD from training and development, and thus, HRM from personnel management. It is not the amount of training and development, but how this fits in with individual and organisational needs that offers a hint of the move towards HRM and HRD.

As Stewart & McGoldrick (1996:2) suggested, a key dimension of HRD is the focus on change - helping organisational members to anticipate and cope with change. This dimension has its roots in the OD approach, characterised by an emphasis on humanistic values (Stewart 1994). It is interesting, then, to consider who manages change processes, requiring specialist skills to facilitate learning and behavioural change (Stewart 1996). Reid and Barrington (1994:171) report that 'change management' was part of the old ITD syllabus.

Harrison (1997:28) suggested that the signs that HRD is happening, that it is operating within the strategic framework of the business, are that it will be:

- durable and meaningful (integral to the long-term direction of the business)
- aligned (tied in with corporate mission and goals)
- internally consistent
- management-led (with specialist staff playing a supportive role)
- expert (skilful provision and management of learning to improve performance).



As Lee stated, 'if SHRD is to be legitimised as an academic discipline or as an important aspect of practice, then further attention needs to be paid to the conceptual base from which we work,' (1997:98). During the 1990s, there was a growing amount written about human resource development (McGoldrick & Stewart 1996), a 'new' phenomenon in the specialist area of training and development. Like HRM, HRD provides the 'ideal' notion of a strategy-led and business-oriented approach to training and development (Fredericks & Stewart 1996). Like HRM, HRD as management practice and organisation function emerged from America (Harris & De Simone 1994, Nadler & Nadler 1989, Rothwell & Kazanas 1994) and tends to 'espouse' theories when there is much confusion as to what HRD might mean in practice.

#### *Practices and roles*

Moorby (1996) offers a definition of the scope of HRD. 'In broad terms, the human resource development function can be regarded as encompassing what is often described as training and development, the field of motivation or reward that is usually functionally organised as compensation and benefits, job description and job evaluation, management and/or career development ... and the whole question of career management, recruitment and assessment,' (Moorby 1996:4). The scope of the function in this explanation goes beyond what is often regarded as HRD, and appears to include elements other authors would include in HRM. Stewart and McGoldrick, whilst arguing that the concept is new (1996:1) and that the scope of HRD is broad, and associated with management and personnel management, suggest that, 'it is intimately bound up with strategy and practice and with the functional world of training and

development... (and) is fundamentally about change. It covers the whole organisation and addresses the whole person,' (1996:2). This suggests the development of a *holistic* approach (from academics?) in the UK.

There have been many approaches to HRD in the UK, which suggests that there are various reasons for, and ways of, engaging in the development of employees, whether as individuals or collectively. Harrison (1992, 1997) and Reid and Barrington (1994) reported on several approaches, such as: *problem solving or problem centred - comprehensive - business strategy - competences - ad hoc/historic*. The first three all seem to be related in some way to the 'systematic' or systems approach to identifying and satisfying training needs. The competences approach suggests the adoption of the government's discourse of vocational education and training. The ad hoc approach might be consistent with a *laissez-faire* philosophy. Buckley and Caple (1995:36) considered approaches to training under a novel heading - they described the 'routes into training' as being reactive or proactive. The reactive route focuses on solving existing, or immediate, performance problems, whilst the proactive route engages in identifying future needs, through corporate strategy and manpower planning, for example. Harrison (1997:37) suggested that the business-led approach is currently the dominant model of HRD, one based on linking the training cycle with strategic objectives. After the 1964 Industrial Training Act, there was a rise in the number of training departments, and the adoption of a 'systems' thinking approach to training and development and so Harrison's argument suggests some progress but also a strong link with the past.

Given these different stages of development of training and development in the UK, Sambrook (1998) devised a typology of three distinct ways in which HRD can be talked about and accomplished through talk, which she labelled: Tell, Sell and Gel. HRD can usefully be conceptualised as a social and discursive construction, where HRD has been talked into being and is accomplished through talk (Sambrook 2000), opening up discursive space (Lawless et al 2011) and shifts to discursive evaluation (Anderson 2011). In addition, recognising the various influencing factors, any current status or discourse of HRD can be considered as the outcome of negotiated evolution (Sambrook 1998) between various stakeholders (national governments, academics and professional bodies). It could also be argued that HRD is currently under threat, with the expansion of coaching and mentoring (Hamlin et al 2008), struggles over the very term itself (Walton 2003), and tensions as HRD is being stretched beyond the organisational context into a national phenomenon (McLean 2004). This suggests paradigmatic shifts in ways of understanding HRD.

### *Paradigms of HRD*

Turning to the paradigmatic context, we note the shift from the dominant positivist/post-positivist orientation, to include more interpretivist/social constructionist perspectives, and an increasing focus on critical approaches. In attempting to be responsible to a wider range of stakeholders, and particularly 'oppressed' learners, there is an emerging consideration of the contradictions and an increasing British critical perspective (Elliott & Turnbull 2005, Sambrook 2004, Trehan et al 2002, Trehan and Rigg 2011, Valentin 2006, Vince 2005), more aligned with 'humanism' or radical humanism (Burrell & Morgan 1979,

Morgan 1990), challenging orthodox HRD practices in Western, capitalist economies (O'Donnell et al 2006). Jean Woodall (2005) argued that critical theory had been noticeably absent in HRD theorising.

Critical HRD has been largely shaped by two bodies of thinking: Critical Management Studies (CMS) and Critical Pedagogy (CP). Critical Management Studies (CMS), as its label suggests, adopts a management perspective, focusing on oppressive managerial practices. CMS has emerged largely in Europe and its proponents tend to be located in Business Schools. In the UK, much HRD teaching occurs in Business Schools, where the curriculum is dominated by the CIPD performance orientation. This is in contrast to the Critical Pedagogy (CP) perspective, focusing on oppressive teaching practices in adult learning in North and South America, where scholars are usually located in Schools of Education.

In the UK, critical HRD has been more influenced by CMS. However, as Elliott and Turnbull (2005) argue, 'Despite the influence of the critical turn in management studies on HRD in the UK, HRD has nevertheless neither been subject to the same degree of critical scrutiny as management and organization studies, nor has it gathered together a significant mass of followers that might constitute it as a 'movement' in its own right'. They were amongst the first scholars in the UK (along with Lee 2001 and Sambrook 1998) to consider HRD from a critical perspective and introduced their ideas at the American Academy of HRD. Elliott and Turnbull were 'concerned that the methodological traditions that guide the majority of HRD research do not allow researchers to engage in studies that challenge the predominantly performative and learning-outcome

focus of the HRD field...We seek to unpick the assumptions behind the performative orientation that dominates much HRD research ... We therefore perceived the need to open up HRD theory to a broader range of methodological and theoretical perspectives.' This first critical session in the US has been followed by a 'Critical HRD' stream at the CMS conference since 2003 and critical HRD has also become a regular theme in the European HRD conference, suggesting a critical turn in HRD. Over the last five or so years, there has been a huge increase in scholarly activity around critical HRD. In the UK, Rigg and colleagues (2007) state there are four main reasons for this critical turn, in response to: the predominance of 'performative values'; an unbalanced reliance on humanist assumptions, and an instrumental view of personhood and self; 'impoverished' HRD research, dominated by positivism, the reification of organisational structures, and independent of human agency, and an HRD curriculum and pedagogy which pay minimal attention to issues of power and emotion.

Valentin (2006), one of few British HRD academics located in a School of Education, argues critical HRD encompasses: insight; critique; and transformative redefinitions. While Valentin talks of critical HRD lacking practical application, Vince (2007) has argued that HRD practitioners ignore the wider politics of organising. Similarly, Trehan (2004) is concerned that although critical approaches have been introduced in pedagogy, little appears to have been transferred to HRD practice, yet Rigg (2005) cautiously notes that critical management learning in the UK can develop critical managers. These contemporary debates continue to shape the development of HRD in the UK.

## **Conclusion**

We have reviewed the initial construction or conceptualisation of HRD – shaped by the historical legacy of the 1964 IT Act, the UK national policy context, and the developments in academic and professional theory and practice. We have noted how HRD has been talked into being, as a social and discursive construction. We also observe the commodification of HRD, with a focus on products to sell (programmes, qualifications, books and conferences), and a purpose of improving performance. However, this performative purpose and dominant positivist paradigm is being challenged, as is perhaps the future of the term HRD in the UK, where it appears to have little relevance to major stakeholders, such as governments and professional bodies.

We conclude that HRD as a concept and a term to describe an area of academic study and professional practice has had variable impact in different sites of practice. It has been argued that higher education is one such site (Sambrook & Stewart 2010). Accepting that argument, our review and analysis clearly indicates that HRD has had significant impact in this site of practice. This is manifest in academic qualification programmes which commonly use the term in named awards and titles of modules making up the curriculum of those awards. It is also indicated in other academic artefacts such as professorial titles, journals and academic networks. However, the impact has been less in the wider sites of professional practice as represented by professional bodies; indicated by both the names adopted by those bodies and in their qualifications. The least impact has been on national HRD as a site of practice. Governments and their agencies in the UK have not adopted the term. This may in part be explained by the narrow

view of HRD apparent in their focus on skills and in their concern with an exclusively economic and financial rationale for investment in HRD activities.

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