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Delphi study

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ABSTRACT

Much work has been done to identify competencies that HR practitioners need for a strategic HR role. However, little, if any, attention has been paid to the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) required of graduates entering the strategic HRM (SHRM) field. This study focuses on this area of neglect by employing the Delphi method to address the question: What core KSAs should SHRM students acquire? Three sequential questionnaires were administered to elicit opinions of leading academics and senior HR practitioners on KSAs that are important and to build consensus on the core KSAs. These processes generated ranked lists of 10 knowledge areas, 5 skills and 5 attitudes that will inform the design of curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate SHRM students.

Key words: Strategic HRM, HRM, Delphi method, Curriculum design

HR professionals have long been exhorted to make greater strategic contributions to their organisations in order to achieve competitive advantage through the effective management of human resources (e.g. Huselid, Jackson & Schuler 1997). Whilst the goal of a more strategic approach to HR management is generally agreed (Sheehan & De Cieri 2012), the necessary change in orientation of HR practitioners away from the transactional and compliance mindset to a more transformational and consultative approach is not yet universally evident (Becton & Schraeder 2009). For instance, Fegley's (2006) survey conducted through the US Society for Human Resource Management found only 56% of respondents reported their HR department had a strategic plan. Findings of several Australian studies (e.g. Anderson, Cooper & ZXhu 2007; Brown, Metz, Cregan & Kulik 2009; Sheehan, Holland & De Cieri 2006) have also suggested that while HR managers are moving towards a more strategic role they are not yet full strategic partners in their organisations .

Reasons for this slow transition are proposed by Brown et al. (2009) who suggest it may be due to role conflict between the strategic and operational aspects while Sheehan et al. (2006) contend that HR's lack of ability to adequately demonstrate value through effective HR metrics and lack of

strategic capacity amongst HR practitioners may hold back progress towards a more strategic role. Becton and Schraeder (2009) identify 13 key issues that affect the transition to Strategic HRM (SHRM) in organisations. These include the transactional mindset of HR practitioners, their predominantly micro view of their organisation, their limited business acumen and education and lack of critical strategic skills. The consensus view seems to be that the transition to SHRM is being held back by lack of key competencies – knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) that individuals draw upon to do their work well (Selmer & Chiu 2004) – by many HR practitioners. What the most crucial of these competencies are is widely debated and this poses challenges for university academics endeavouring to prepare students for SHRM roles.

Several models that delineate the range of competencies needed for a strategic HR role have been proposed (e.g. Carroll 1991; Storey 1992; Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson & Younger 2007; Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank & Ulrich 2012). Such competency models can assist in identifying the learning and development needs of HR practitioners and in assessing their role performance. However, little, if any, attention has been paid to the kinds of KSAs that students of SHRM should acquire in order to be effective contributors to their organisation's SHRM efforts. The current study focuses on this area of neglect by attempting to bring together the views of leading academics and senior HR practitioners to build a consensus view of the core KSAs required of graduates entering the SHRM field.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

SHRM integrates the fields of Strategic Management and Human Resource Management (HRM), and is a field of study that is still taking form (Boxall & Purcell 2011). While the intellectual roots of the field can be traced back to the 1920, most of the academic literature on SHRM has been published over the last 30 years (Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade & Drake 2009). Boxall and Purcell contend that the field of SHRM has emerged to address gaps in the Strategic Management and HRM literatures. In their view, much of the Strategic Management literature downplays the human issues that affect the viability and relative performance of firms, while much of HRM literature carries on the preoccupation of the personnel management literature with

the classical sub-functions of HR practice (e.g. recruitment, selection, training and so forth). The state of flux of the SHRM literature is reflected in the widely varying topics that are addressed in the small stock of SHRM textbooks and university unit outlines. A cursory glance at the table of contents of texts written by leading authors in the field such as Boselie (2010), Boxall and Purcell (2011), and Truss, Mankin and Kelliher (2012) reveals a wide variation in the topics that they address in their texts. This creates a practical dilemma for SHRM academics when they need to consider what should be taught. The learning and performance of SHRM students is likely to be impeded if academics are unable to provide students with a sufficiently coherent, organised representation of the SHRM literature (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett & Norman 2010).

In addition to the apparent state of discord among HR academics regarding the core knowledge areas in SHRM, the academic-practice gap presents a further challenge to HR academics seeking to ensure that their students acquire the KSAs that are deemed highly relevant by experts in the academic and practitioner communities. Studies (e.g. Deadrick & Gibson 2007) have shown that HR academics and HR practitioners are interested in different topics. As a result of these different interest areas, HR academics and HR professionals are also likely to hold differing views on the composition of a core syllabi for SHRM.

OVERVIEW OF THE DELPHI METHOD

This study employed the Delphi method to address the question: What core knowledge, skills and attitudes should Strategic HRM students acquire? In their seminal work, Linstone and Turoff (1975) define the Delphi method as “a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (p.3). Researchers have applied the method to a wide variety of situations as a tool for expert problem solving and developed variations of the ‘traditional’ method tailored to specific problem types and outcome goals (Okoli & Pawlowski 2004). Although there are several Delphi variations, the method is generally characterised by a specific sequence of events that include: selection of an expert panel; formulation of questions; generation of statements of opinion; reduction and categorisation, rating analysis and iteration (Clibbens, Walters & Baird 2012).

In regard to panel selection, some commentators (e.g. Okoli & Pawlowski 2004) recommend adoption of rigorous guidelines for the process of selecting experts for the study. In contrast, other researchers (e.g. Brill, Bishop & Walker, 2006) prefer to interpret expert panel broadly as the individuals involved in the work. There is also little agreement about the size of the expert panel (Keeney, Hasson & McKenna 2001). According to Okoli and Pawlowski (2004), the literature recommends 10-18 on a Delphi panel and some studies (e.g. Godfrey, Haddock, Fisher & Lund, 2006; Maguire & Csech, 2006) have indeed used panels that fall within this range. However, many studies (e.g. Howze and Dalrymple, 2004; Rossouw, Hacker & de Vries, 2010; Taylor, 2005) seem to have operated with panels comprised of 20 – 40 participants.

In some Delphi studies (e.g. McGuire & Cseh 2006) round one is a ‘brainstorming’ stage, where panel members respond to open-ended questions, while in other studies (e.g. Rossouw et al. 2010) participants are asked to respond to specific propositions contained in a structured questionnaire. As Critcher and Gladstone (1998) note, in focussing the study there is a balance to be struck between developing specific propositions that participants respond to and keeping a flexible agenda to leave room for spontaneous contributions from participants. When round one is used as a ‘brainstorming’ stage, subsequent rounds often take the form of structured questionnaires incorporating feedback to each panel member in the form of a summary of the results of the previous round (Keeney et al. 2001). In regard to the number of rounds, while Linstone and Turoff (1975) suggest four rounds, several studies (e.g. Brill et al. 2006; Critcher & Gladstone 1998; Godfrey et al. 2006) have used just two rounds to prevent panellist fatigue and dropout.

The Delphi method was chosen as the data collection strategy for the current study for primarily three reasons. First, the Delphi method has been demonstrated in the literature as a reliable empirical method for collecting opinions of subject matter experts and deriving consensus among them to the greatest extent possible on a core syllabus in a range of fields, including sports medicine (Fallon & Trevitt 2006), technical education (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews 2004), nursing (Keeney et al. 2001) and information systems (Okoli & Pawlowski 2004). Second, a web-based Delphi study offered a means whereby geographically dispersed academic and practitioner experts

could be consulted. Third, the Delphi method would ensure equal participation by academic and practitioner participants because the anonymous interaction of respondents provides a layer of protection for individual voices (Brill et al. 2006).

RATIONALE FOR THE CORE KNOWLEDGE ITEMS IN OUR STUDY

For the first round of our Delphi study we decided to develop specific propositions contained in a structured questionnaire that panellists would be asked to respond to, rather than use a 'brainstorming' approach. The list of knowledge propositions (core knowledge areas) was compiled by drawing on our knowledge of SHRM and conducting a content analysis of scholarly SHRM journal articles and textbooks to identify recurring instances of topics. The 17 knowledge areas that we included in the first round of our Delphi study (see Table 1) can be roughly grouped into three categories: (1) foundational knowledge areas; (2) focal knowledge areas; and (3) contemporary knowledge areas.

{INSERT TABLE 1 HERE}

In regard to the foundational knowledge areas (items 1-5 in Table 1), the HRM literature often distinguishes between *micro* and *macro* HRM (Huselid & Becker 2011). *Micro* HRM focuses on functional aspects of the field, such as recruitment, selection, and training, while *macro* HRM involves a more organisationally focussed examination of HRM and addresses issues such as aligning 'bundles' of HR practices (or HR systems) with business strategy. Similarly, the literature often distinguishes between *soft* and *hard* models of HRM (Legge 2001), and *unitarist* and *pluralist* views of employer and employee goal alignment (Van Buren, Greenwood & Sheehan 2011). In the *hard model*, employees are regarded as a resource cost to be minimised, while in the *soft model* employees are perceived as valued assets and a source of competitive advantage. According to the *unitarist* view, organisations and their employees have common interests. In contrast, from a *pluralist* view, whilst organisations and their employees may have some common interests they are also in at least partial conflict. Some commentators (e.g. Van Buren et al. 2011) have argued that such conflict is the basis of role conflict that HR practitioners typically experience in enacting their business partner and employee champion roles. These two *HR roles*

and the other roles that HR professionals should enact (Ulrich et al. 2012) were also deemed foundational knowledge areas. Finally, as Boxall and Purcell (2011) have noted, HRM refers to the activities of management in organising *work* and employing people. The impact of High-Performance Work Systems on organisational performance and the HR practices that support HPWS has received considerable attention in the SHRM literature (Boxall & Macky 2009). Therefore, *management choices in work systems* was included as a foundational knowledge area.

Regarding the focal knowledge areas (items 6-14 in Table 1), the process of aligning HR strategy with organisational strategy is a key concern in SHRM (Schuler & Jackson 1987). Therefore, it was considered important to include *the meanings of organisational strategy and HR strategy*, as well as *HR's role in developing, implementing and evaluating organisational strategy* on the list of knowledge areas. Related to this, the notions of *vertical and horizontal alignment* are frequently mentioned in the SHRM literature (Delery 1998). *Vertical alignment* is the process by which HR systems are aligned with an organisation's strategic goals, while *horizontal alignment* refers to the alignment of HR practices into a coherent system of practices that support one another. Given the centrality of the HRM-performance link in the SHRM literature (Buller & McEvoy 2012), it was considered important that students develop a critical perspective on the body of *research attempting to establish links between HRM practices and organisational performance*. Three of the most prominent perspectives within this body of research are the *universalistic, contingent and configurational perspectives* (Alcazar, Fernandez & Gardey 2005). Much of this body of research uses the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm as a theoretical basis (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2009). Thus students should acquire knowledge of the RBV of the firm and other *theories that underpin research into the link between HRM and organisational performance* (e.g. Human Capital Theory). The *HR architecture perspective* makes the point that not all employee groups are strategically valuable and emphasises that HR systems should be varied, with different HR systems selected for different groups of employees (Lepak & Snell 1999). Despite variation in the goals of HR systems, there are some key links that all HR systems need if they are to reach their intended outcomes (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Therefore students need to examine *the complex chain of links between HRM policy and organisational performance*. Finally, on a more practical

level, students need to understand *how HR metrics can be used to evaluate HR's contributions to organisational performance*.

Three of the knowledge areas (items 15-17 in Table 1) could arguably be placed in the category of contemporary knowledge areas. The knowledge areas *strategic talent management* and *employee engagement* have received a considerable degree of practitioner interest (Truss et al. 2012) and primarily for this reason were included on the list of knowledge areas. Lastly, there seems to be wide agreement that HR practitioners must have the know-how to *manage strategic change* (Ulrich et al. 2012).

RECRUITMENT OF DELPHI PARTICIPANTS

The procedures that we adopted to recruit Delphi participants for the current study are aligned with a purposive sampling approach and were informed by guidelines contained in an article by Okoli and Pawlowski (2004). The criteria that we employed to develop a list of academics that we might invite to serve on the panel were: academic qualifications; experience in teaching SHRM; number of scholarly publications in HRM; level of appointment (e.g. associate professor, professor); and membership of the editorial board of a scholarly HRM journal. Several leading academics in the field of SHRM were already known to the researchers and other potential participants in the Delphi study were identified through sources such as scholarly publications and university websites. The criteria that we used to develop a list of practitioners that we might invite to serve on the panel were (seniority of) current SHRM position, years of experience as a strategic HR practitioner, service on the board of any HRM professional bodies, number of publications in HRM practitioner journals, and academic qualifications. Potential practitioner participants were identified through personal contacts of research team members and their referrals. The research team has developed a wide-ranging network within the HR practitioner community through extensive experience in senior HR practitioner roles and active involvement with the Western Australia chapter of the Australia Human Resources Institute. After compiling a list of suitable academics and practitioners that we hoped would be willing to serve on the Delphi panel we emailed them each an invitation letter outlining the nature of the study and the approximate time

commitment we anticipated would be required of them. A total of 64 invitation letters were sent to potential panellists. Of these, 37 participated in Round 1 and 35 in Rounds 2 and 3 of the study.

DELPHI ROUNDS

Round 1: Consistent with the approach adopted in most Delphi studies (Clibbens et al. 2012), a decision was made to pilot test the first round of the Delphi study. Pilot testing the first round is especially important because the questions used in the first round are the basis for subsequent rounds (Hung, Altschuld & Lee 2008). Pilot testing, for the most part, followed the protocols recommended by Dillman (2007). The process started with two academic colleagues reviewing a printed draft copy of the questionnaire. The aim of this stage of pretesting was to elicit suggestions about the questionnaire content and layout based on their experiences with completing and designing surveys. A printed draft copy of the questionnaire was also reviewed by two HR practitioners with the aim of getting feedback about how we could make the questionnaire more ‘practitioner-friendly’. The review of the draft questionnaire by knowledgeable colleagues and practitioners was followed by a small pilot study that emulated the procedures proposed for Round 1 of the main study. Table 2 lists the skill and attitude items that were used in the Round 1 survey questionnaire. The Demographic section of the Round 1 questionnaire collected information about the panel members that could be used to assess their level of expertise in SHRM (see the section below titled ‘Profile of participants’).

{INSERT TABLE 2 HERE}

In each of the Core Knowledge section of the questionnaire (see Table 1), Core Skills section (see Table 2) and the Core Attitudes section (see Table 2) the participants were presented with a list of knowledge areas, skills and attitudes respectively, that ‘some people’ might think are the core knowledge, skills and attitudes in SHRM. Participants were asked to: (1) consider each and indicate how important or unimportant they thought each is in SHRM on a five-point Likert scale; and (2) add any items that they thought were important but missing from the lists of core KSAs. Skills, in the context of the Round 1 questionnaire, referred to intellectual skills (such as ‘analysis’), as opposed to other types of skills, such as manual and psychomotor skills, or social

and interpersonal skills (Sadler-Smith 2006). In generating the list of core skills to include in the questionnaire a key consideration was the availability of a knowledge base to underpin the skills (i.e. the Core Knowledge items). A further consideration was the practical issue of whether the acquisition of a skill could actually be assessed during the course of a semester. Thus, we restricted the list of skills to those that we thought could be demonstrated through assessment methods such as organisation-based projects and case studies.

In the context of our study, the term ‘attitude’ refers to an evaluation of an object of thought and a predisposition to act in a certain manner (Bohner & Dickel 2011). In compiling the short list of attitudes, we purposefully omitted generic attitudes, such as attitudes towards teamwork and lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

Round 2: In this round we fed back to panellists results of the Round 1 survey. In the Round 2 survey questionnaire we listed the 13 knowledge items and five skills that panellists thought were important additions to our lists from Round 1 (see Table 3). Participants were asked to rate the importance of these additional knowledge and skill items. In regard to attitudes, panellists generally supported the attitude statements that we proposed in Round 1 and there were no important additions to our list, so we asked participants to rank them in order of importance.

{INSERT TABLE 3 HERE}

Round 3: In this round we fed back to panellists results of the Round 2 survey. In the round 3 survey questionnaire panellists were provided with consolidated lists of the researcher- and panellist provided SHRM knowledge areas (30) and skills (11). From this consolidated list the participants were asked to select their top 10 core knowledge areas and their top five core skills that they thought SHRM students should be taught.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Our 37 Round 1 participants were located in six countries. To assist the reader in assessing the expertise of our Delphi panel we have provided information about the participants in two tables. Information in Table 4 shows that the panel were academically well-qualified with 24 panel members possessing a Doctorate and 7 a Masters qualification. 18 of the panel members indicated

that they were an academic, 11 indicated that they were a HR practitioner, while 7 perceived that they had equal expertise in both. A large majority of the panel held senior positions; 20 of the academics were Professors or Associate Professors and 12 of the practitioners indicated that they currently hold strategic level positions in their organisations. 10 of the practitioners who responded to the question about the length of their work experience indicated that they had worked at their current level for 5 or more years.

{INSERT TABLE 4 HERE}

Table 5 shows that a large majority of the panel (30 members) had taught SHRM or a similar subject. Of these panellists, 27 had taught SHRM or a similar subject 5 or more times. 17 members of the panel have served on the editorial board of a scholarly HRM journal, while 15 have served on the board of a HRM professional body. 20 members of the panel indicated that they had published 16 or more scholarly HRM publications, while 25 indicated that they had published 1 or more articles in a HRM practitioner journal.

{INSERT TABLE 5 HERE}

RESULTS

Knowledge: In Round 1 the 37 participants ranked almost every knowledge item listed in Table 1 (17 items) as fairly important to very important. The panellists also proposed 13 items that they thought were important additions to our list (Table 3). In Round 2 panellists rated the importance of these additional items. In Round 3 panellists were presented with a consolidated list of knowledge items (30) arranged according to their mean scores in previous rounds and asked to select the top 10 core knowledge areas that they thought should be taught in SHRM. The results are shown in Table 6 below.

Skills: In Round 1 the participants also showed strong levels of support for the six skill propositions (Table 2) and proposed five items that they thought were important additions to our list of core skills (Table 3). In Round 2 panellists rated the importance of these additional skill items. In Round 3 panellists were presented with a consolidated list of core skills (11) arranged

according to their mean scores in previous rounds and asked to select the top five core skills that they thought should be taught in SHRM. The results are shown in Table 6.

Attitudes: The Round 1 participants generally agreed with the core attitudes (Table 2). None of the panellists made suggestions regarding additional core attitudes. Thus we asked panellists to rank the attitudes in Round 2. The results of their ranking are shown in Table 6.

{INSERT TABLE 6 HERE}

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

None of the *foundational knowledge areas* that we proposed in our Round 1 questionnaire were included on the panellists' list of top 10 core knowledge areas. This is understandable given that most of the foundational knowledge areas would probably comprise small components of a SHRM syllabus. Two of the three *contemporary knowledge areas* that we proposed (*HR's role in managing strategic change* and *strategic talent management*) were included on the panellists' top 10 list. Employee engagement was absent from the list. Four of the nine *focal knowledge areas* that we proposed were included on the panellists' top 10 list. It is interesting to note that several of the focal knowledge areas that are absent from the panellists' top 10 list relate to research into the HRM-performance link. One potential explanation for this finding is that the panellists may have thought that such knowledge is not essential for working effectively in the HR profession.

As noted previously, in generating the list of core skills to include in the Round 1 questionnaire we focused on intellectual skills (e.g. analysis). The results in Table 6 show that panellists placed greater emphasis on behavioural skills generally associated with high levels of emotional intelligence, e.g. relationship management, persuasiveness and use of influence tactics. Only one of the skills that we proposed (*identify and analyse key internal and external factors influencing management choices in HRM*) was included amongst the panellists' top five core skills.

The results regarding core attitudes (Table 6) show panellists provided strong support for two attitudes in particular: students should be able to demonstrate a belief in or an appreciation of (a) *employees as a strategic asset and a potential source of sustainable competitive advantage*; and (b) *the importance of strategic thinking*. Of the five attitudes, these two were ranked first or

second most often. Given critical thinking is emphasised in higher education (Lloyd & Bahr 2010), a somewhat surprising result was the relatively low ranking (5/5) assigned to *adopting a critical perspective on SHRM theory, research and practice*. One potential explanation for this is that panellists perceived critical thinking as a generic goal of education, rather than a core attitude that SHRM students should acquire. It is also noteworthy that panellists were not able to propose any additional attitude items that they thought were important but missing from our list. This may be because the affective domain is a neglected domain of learning in university education.

We also asked the panellists to reflect on the Delphi process and respond to the question: ‘Looking back on your experience as a panellist, how well do you think this process achieved its aim of building consensus about KSAs necessary for SHRM graduates?’ Their responses identified some potential limitations of the process. These were: (1) the process was somewhat restrictive; (2) the process did not allow the Delphi researchers to identify and address the varying understandings that were inevitably inherent in the process; and (3) there was a lack of a pedagogical perspective in the process.

In conclusion, the processes involved in the Delphi study generated 30 knowledge areas, 11 skills and 5 attitudes that panellists confirmed were important in SHRM. They also helped to discriminate among these KSAs in terms of their relative importance by generating ranked lists of 10 knowledge areas, 5 skills and 5 attitudes. Feedback from the panellists significantly modified our perceptions of the core KSAs that students should acquire as articulated in our Round 1 propositions, particularly in regard to the types of skills that students should acquire. The results of the study will inform our decision making regarding the design of curricula for SHRM units at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This will include developing learning outcomes for the units at each level. These learning outcomes will need to be aligned with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Council (2011) levels criteria. Furthermore, as specified by the AQF, the learning outcomes will need to be expressed in terms of the dimensions of knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills. A further challenge is to research teaching and learning strategies that will facilitate students’ achievement of the learning outcomes.

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Table 1
Round 1 Core Knowledge Items

Knowledge: Students should have acquired knowledge of	
1	The soft and hard perspectives of HRM
2	The unitarist and pluralist views of employer and employee goal alignment
3	The micro and macro aspects of HRM
4	The various roles that HR plays
5	Management choices in work systems
6	The meaning of organisational/business strategy and HR strategy
7	HR's role in developing, implementing and evaluating organisational strategy
8	Vertical and horizontal alignment in HRM
9	The HR architecture perspective
10	Research into the link between HRM and organisational performance
11	Theories that underpin research into the link between HRM and organisational performance (e.g., resource-based view of the firm, human capital theory)
12	Universalistic, contingent and configurational perspectives on research into the link between HRM and organisational performance
13	The causal chain between HR policy and organisational performance
14	How HR metrics can be used to evaluate HR's contributions to organisational performance
15	HR's role in managing strategic change (e.g. culture change, downsizing, mergers and acquisitions)
16	Strategic talent management
17	How to evaluate levels of employee engagement and develop and implement strategies to improve engagement

Table 2
Round 1 Core Skills and Attitudes Items

Skills: Within an organisation, students should be able to.....	
1	Identify and analyse key internal and external factors influencing management choices in HRM
2	Assess the extent to which strategic management of human resources is evident
3	Analyse strengths and weaknesses of the work systems
4	Identify differences between management intentions and management actions in HRM and analyse their causes and impacts
5	Assess the extent of vertical and horizontal alignment in HRM
6	Identify and critically analyse the roles that HR plays
Attitudes: Students should be able to demonstrate a belief in or an appreciation of	
1	Employees as a strategic asset and a potential source of sustainable competitive advantage
2	The importance of maintaining high ethical standards in their HRM role
3	Adopting a critical perspective on strategic HRM theory, research and practice
4	The importance of strategic thinking
5	The tensions HRM professionals face in balancing their business partner and employee champion roles

Table 3

Additional Knowledge and Skill Items Proposed by Panellists

Knowledge: Students should have acquired knowledge of	
1	The process of workforce planning and the importance of its alignment with organisational strategic direction.
2	The key role line managers play in people management and implementing HR strategy.
3	The critical role of key stakeholders (CEO, line managers etc.) in implementing 'strong' HR systems.
4	Significant external environmental factors affecting organisations and their impact (e.g., legislation, economic and political environment).
5	The support HR needs to provide to line managers, CEOs and senior executives to enable them to perform their people management roles effectively.
6	The competencies line managers, senior executives and CEOs need to develop to effectively perform their people management roles.
7	The role of effective HR strategy in developing sustainable organisations.
8	The potential benefits of High Performance Work Systems to organisational performance and the HR practices that facilitate their development.
9	Cultural differences that may impact management of people in international organisations and locations.
10	The additional responsibilities of Strategic HRM in international organisations and those operating in an international context.
11	HR's responsibility in the development and support of a knowledge management strategy.
12	The important role of collaboration and social networks in fostering innovation and organisational agility and HR's role in developing and supporting collaboration and social networks.
13	HR's role in developing and supporting the organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.
Skills: Within an organisation, students should be able to.....	
1	Make a persuasive business case for HR investments.
2	Build and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders (e.g., CEO, executive board, line managers).
3	Use positive political skills (e.g., persuasion, rationality, assertiveness) to influence human resources decisions.
4	Initiate and sustain organisational change.
5	Conduct an environmental scan for the workforce planning process.

Table 4

Qualifications, Area of Expertise, Current Position and Years of Experience

Question	Answer	Response	%
Highest qualification achieved?			
1	Doctorate (PhD etc)	24	65%
2	Masters	7	19%
3	Undergraduate degree	2	5%
4	Other	4	11%
	Total	37	100%
Your area of expertise?			
1	Academic/researcher	18	50%
2	Professional practitioner	11	31%
3	Equal expertise in both	7	19%
	Total	36	100%
Your current position – academic?			
1	Professor	11	44%
2	Associate Professor	9	36%
3	Senior Lecturer	3	12%
4	Lecturer	1	4%
5	Other	1	4%
	Total	25	100%
Your current position – practitioner?			
1	Strategic level	12	86%
2	Operational/Tactical level	1	7%
3	Other	1	7%
	Total	14	100%
How many years have you worked at this level - practitioner?			
1	Less than 1	0	0%
2	1	0	0%
3	2	1	9%
4	3	0	0%
5	4	0	0%
6	5 or more	10	91%
	Total	11	100%

Table 5
Teaching Experience, Board Membership and Publications

Question	Answer	Response	%
Have you taught Strategic HRM or a similar subject?			
1	Yes	30	81%
2	No	7	19%
	Total	37	100%
Number of times you have taught Strategic HRM or a similar subject?			
1	1	0	0%
2	2	0	0%
3	3	2	7%
4	4	1	3%
5	5 or more	27	90%
	Total	30	100%
Have you served on the editorial board of a scholarly HRM journal?			
1	Yes	17	46%
2	No	20	54%
	Total	37	100%
Have you served on the board of a HRM professional body?			
1	Yes	15	41%
2	No	22	59%
	Total	37	100%
Have you published HRM articles?			
1	Yes	26	70%
2	No	11	30%
	Total	37	100%
Number of scholarly HRM publications?			
1	0	2	8%
2	1-5	3	12%
3	6-10	0	0%
4	11-15	0	0%
5	16-20	4	16%
6	21 or more	16	64%
	Total	25	100%
Number of publications in HRM practitioner journals?			
1	0	1	4%
2	1-5	10	38%
3	6-10	5	19%
4	11-15	3	12%
5	16-20	3	12%
6	21 or more	4	15%
	Total	26	100%

Table 6
Key Results of the Delphi Study (No. of responses = 35)

Top ten core knowledge areas		
Rank	<i>Students should have acquired knowledge of...</i>	Selected by:
1	How HR metrics can be used to evaluate HR's contributions to organisational performance.	28
2	The meaning of organisational/business strategy and HR strategy.	26
3	HR's role in developing, implementing and evaluating organisational strategy.	26
4	HR's role in managing strategic change (e.g. culture change, downsizing, mergers and acquisitions).	25
5	The process of workforce planning and the importance of its alignment with organisational strategic direction.	23
6	The key role line managers play in people management and implementing HR strategy.	22
7	Significant external environmental factors affecting organisations and their impact (e.g., legislation, economic and political environment).	20
8	Vertical and horizontal alignment in HRM.	16
9	The critical role of key stakeholders (CEO, line managers etc.) in implementing 'strong' HR systems.	16
10	Strategic talent management.	15
Top five core skills		
Rank	<i>Within an organisation, students should be able to...</i>	Selected by:
1	Build and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders (e.g., CEO, executive board, line managers).	29
2	Make a persuasive business case for HR investments.	29
3	Identify and analyse key internal and external factors influencing management choices in HRM.	23
4	Use positive political skills (e.g., persuasion, rationality, assertiveness) to influence human resources decisions.	20
5	Initiate and sustain organisational change.	15
Ranking of core attitudes		
Rank	<i>Students should be able to demonstrate a belief in or an appreciation of...</i>	Responses*
1	Employees as a strategic asset and a potential source of sustainable competitive advantage.	31
2	The importance of strategic thinking.	31
3	The importance of maintaining high ethical standards in their HRM role.	31
4	The tensions HRM professionals face in balancing their various HR roles.	31
5	Adopting a critical perspective on strategic HRM theory, research and practice.	31
<p>*Note: The 35 Round 2 participants were presented with the list of attitude items and asked to click and drag the item to their preferred position on the list. Four participants did not alter the rank order of the items, presumably because they agreed with the order in which the items were listed. Unfortunately, this meant they were shown as 'non-respondents'. However, even if their 'responses' were counted, the rank order shown in this table would not be affected.</p>		