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How well is HRD meeting the needs of those it is intending to serve? From diffusion to confusion.

Abstract

Human Resource Development (HRD) is broadly concerned with individual and organizational learning and development. However, it is unclear how well HRD is meeting the needs of those it intends to serve and how key stakeholders (i.e., HRD professionals, managers, employees) perceive this function in organizations. This study explored the perception of the HRD function from the perspectives of employees, managers, and HRD professionals in UK public and private sector organizations. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 30 participants across six organizations provided insights into the perceived role of HRD professionals. Employees and managers acknowledged HRD as a central focus for learning and development, but the HRD function is not perceived as strategic. HRD professionals, on the other hand, claimed that they have a strategic influence and add value through the employee life cycle. The differing views are centred on the perceived value, positioning, and responsiveness of the HRD role. Thus, a framework is developed to illustrate the differing perceptions between HRD professionals and other critical stakeholders. Previous studies have provided extensive evidence of HRD's role and function. This study provides insights from the internal stakeholders on how HRD professionals and the HRD function meet their needs.

Key words: HRD, internal stakeholders, perceptions, UK

Introduction

Gold et al. (2003) stated that Human Resource Development (HRD) "should be characterized by diversity, creativity and debate about the meanings and practices that constitute its field" (p. 452). Although the role of HRD is people development and rational planning, Vince (2003) argued that the profession has been weak strategically, thereby shifting the emphasis of learning on individuals. Lee (2007) suggested shifting HRD from training and development to a holistic perspective that shifts boundaries, conflict, and change. In the UK, HRD involves duties and processes that impact organizational and

individual learning (Stewart & McGoldrick, 1996). Yet, tensions exist in meeting organizational outcome needs (Roche, Teague, Coughlan, et al., 2013). Some employees perceive HRD as a supplier of technical training and an invisible role in organizations (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2015).

Despite growing interest in understanding the role of HRD in organizations, current research lacks complete detail on how HRD professionals meet the needs of different stakeholder groups. Therefore, this research aims to provide insights into internal stakeholders' perception of HRD's role. The study will answer the following research questions:

What do HRD professionals see as the most valuable aspects of their role?
What do key stakeholders see as the most valuable aspects of HRD's role?
What are the differing perceptions between HRD professionals and other key stakeholders?

This paper will briefly share the recent academic thinking about the widening and changing practices of HRD professionals. Then, through evidence-based research, similarities and differences in perceptions and expectations from different stakeholders concerning HRD's role in six UK organizations will be shared. This study will highlight discrepancies and differences with the shared underpinning issues and challenges for all stakeholders. The implications for HRD professionals to progress the future reputation of the HRD profession will then be shared.

This paper proceeds as follows — first, the review of scholarship on the role of HRD and the theoretical argument on stakeholder theory. Second, the research design, data collection, and analysis are explained. Then, the key findings, discussion, conclusions, and implications are presented.

Literature Review

Recent studies have focused on the changing definitions of the role of HRD (Hamlin & Stewart 2011; Wang, Werner, Sun, et al., 2017) and the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of HRD's role (Torraco & Lundgren, 2020). The HRD field of study and practice has changed. It is no longer just about training and development (Lee, 2011; Hamlin & Stewart, 2011), and HRD is no longer the sole responsibility of HRD professionals (Torraco & Lundgren, 2020).

Hamlin & Stewart (2011) help to show the breadth of the role by reviewing a plethora of HRD definitions and noting that HRD has four key purposes: improving individual or group

effectiveness and performance, improving organizational effectiveness and performance, developing knowledge, skills, and competencies, and enhancing human potential and potential growth (p. 214). This clearly shows that HRD is underpinned by learning and development, but this is just one part of its multi-disciplinary role. HRD now encompasses the additional and important aspects of organisational development, change leadership, talent management, as well as coaching, and mentoring too.

Another change over time is that HRD is no longer expected to be the primary agency for promoting HRD aspects among employees (Torraco & Lundgren, 2020). HRD should now be seen as a central activity within the organization and the responsibility of everyone. Managers should recognize gaps, develop skills, and facilitate opportunities; and employees should have autonomy to recognize, request, and access opportunities. Gardiner et al. (2001) stated that

> the adoption of learning as a central competence of the company is a collective responsibility and will happen only as the result of carefully designed strategy and shared management objectives. The task for human resource professionals is to oil the wheels of these processes … the responsibility must be shared now at every level within the organization (pp. 401-402).

They also state that "new thinking on the way employees are managed suggests that conventional styles of management may have to change radically in order to accommodate this new focus" (p. 401). The suggestion is that HRD professionals have clarity about the new purpose and the direction of travel of their role, but that those managers enacting some of their diffused HRD related duties (Cappelli & Tavis, 2018) and those employees on the receiving end may have differing needs and expectations.

Torraco and Lundgren (2020) in their comprehensive review of recent HRD literature examining the role of HRD, highlight some of the key criticisms and challenges that were emerging:

- HRD is not aligned with the organization's strategy and business needs.
- HRD does not demonstrate its effectiveness and return on investment (ROI).
- HRD is pre-occupied with offering programmes aimed at marginal problems.
- HRD carries out limited needs analysis.
- HRD has insufficient first-hand knowledge of work and the workplace.

These are not necessarily new assertions, but they do point to the need for further research to examine the perceptions of differing stakeholders (i.e., for instance; leaders, supervisors,

and employees) to determine how well HRD is meeting the needs of those it is intending to serve. This paper seeks to address this gap by sharing insights from recent empirical research into how HRD might be able to increase its reach and enhance its reputation.

The study has been underpinned by the notion of stakeholder theory; proposing that an organization is characterized as a set of relationships, crucial to its functioning, among individuals or groups who affect or are affected by its business operations (Freeman, 2010). Wang et al. (2017) state that HRD's defining attribute is its host-system-dependence, and its contribution to the host system. The host system is made up of a variety of internal and external stakeholders, of which managers and employees are key internal customers who affect and are affected by the host system's operations. Alagaraja & Egan (2013) states that internal customer perceptions of the role and responsibilities of HRD professionals and the HRD function are crucial for assessing the value and effectiveness of HRD. Wang et al. (2017) goes on to affirm that "HRD will not be a panacea to cure all organizational or social problems … HRD is a tool or mechanism for achieving its (organizational) desired outcomes" (p. 1173). HRD may not be the panacea for all HRD practices, but it does need to 'oil the wheels' as stated earlier.

Study Design and Data Collection

This study adopted a critical realist position and an interpretivist epistemological perspective, which aimed to offer "explanation, clarification, and demystification" (Bell, Harley & Bryman, 2022). The interpretivist perspective supports qualitative research which seeks to provide new insights through 'how', 'who', and 'why' questions (Doz, 2011). In this study, qualitative methodology provides rich and thick process descriptions (Doz, 2011) of HRD professionals' experiences and how they are perceived by other stakeholders in their organizations. Semi-structured interviews are deemed the most suitable method to enable participants to express their feelings, and thus present a more realistic picture of their experiences (Fontana & Frey, 1998).

A total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted between July 2020 and November 2021. Snowball sampling was used to collect data from HRD professionals (senior/director and mid-level HRD positions), managers (senior and middle managers), and employees (non-management). Data was collected from six organizations - 10 participants across two Higher Education Institutions, 10 across two Healthcare Trusts, 6 in the Hospitality sector and 4 within the Transportation sector. All the organizations were based in England – Liverpool, Birmingham, and Wolverhampton. Table 1 provides a descriptive summary of the organizations.

Set questions were asked by two interviewers (one interviewer per three organizations) focusing on the key aspects of the role, all aspects of the employee lifecycle (i.e., induction, training, development, performance management, talent management), return on investment/evaluation, and future HRD activities. Some interviews were carried out face-to-face, but the majority were carried out online through Microsoft Teams. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed lasting one hour on average. The information gathered was then thematically analysed through the use of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and crosschecked by the two different authors to answer the three research questions.

Most of the data collection was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and there were some lockdown issues in relation to access; hence, it was not possible to find organizations of similar sizes wishing to participate, nor was it possible to achieve an even spread across the key stakeholders for each organization. This study was part of a more comprehensive project looking at the HRD role within 20 companies within the UK, the Netherlands, and the USA respectively (to be published in an upcoming HRD book), but for the purposes of this paper the focus will be on the findings from the six UK case study organizations. Despite the differences in organizational size and sector, some similar themes emerged regarding differing expectations, perceptions, and potential tensions, together with the underlying challenges of the various roles performed by HRD professionals.

Table 1. Case organizations and participants

Case organizations *(codes used with quotes)*	Sector	Region in the UK	Year established	Size of organization *(by number of employees)*	HRD roles	Manager roles	Employee roles
1 – HEI1	Higher Education	West Midlands	1800s	Over 2,000	3	0	1
2 – RAIL	Transport	West Midlands	2000s	Over 2,500	3	0	1
3 – NHS1	Health	Northwest	1990s	Over 5,000	0	3	1
4 – PUB	Hospitality	West Midlands	1800s	Over 14,000	2	2	2
5 – HEI2	Higher Education	West Midlands	1800s	Over 2,000	2	2	2
6 – NHS2	Health	West Midlands	1990s	Over 6,000	2	2	2
Total interviewed					12	9	9

Findings

This study found differing perspectives of HRD roles among HRD professionals, those with some HRD responsibilities (managers) but not within the HRD function, and employees. Before providing the specific findings of this study, it is worth noting that in most cases (HEI1, RAIL, NHS1, HEI2, NHS2), HRD is considered a primary function within the organization. However, one organization (PUB) have HRD embedded within the broader human resource management (HRM) function. The various participants' perceptions differ on what the HRD function does and its value, as expressed below.

HRD practitioner perceptions of the value in their role

HRD professionals at HEI1 and RAIL acknowledge that the role of HRD has evolved over the years. HRD was about delivering mandatory training to meet the needs of the business, and the training took place in a physical space for long hours. However, the training and development courses and the delivery medium have changed, thus changing the nature of their role and responsibilities. Three themes emerged from the analysis concerning the perception of value in their role: 'strategic influence', 'value-added', and the 'employee lifecycle'.

Strategic influence

From the view of nine HRD professionals, strategic influence is the ability to effect decisions at a higher level. However, three HRD professionals claim their HRD function is not strategic. The nine HRD professionals at HEI1, PUB, NHS1, and NHS2 believe that senior leaders accept them in the organization; but this is about acknowledging their contributions.

As one participant said,

> *We are being listened to more and more because of the impact of what we are doing, not being seen on the periphery – some more open to that than others are* (HRD Professional, NHS1).

The strategic effect is action-led, which means HRD is changing the nature of how learning and development are changed, thus developing the learning culture.

> *We also hold the ring on culture – cultural development, we have a very clear culture programme; to change our ways of working, to be more positive – a conscious decision by the organization to do this four years ago … Responsibility and accountability with this sit with organizational development* (HRD Professional, NHS2).

Whilst another research participant said they

> *spend 80% of my time doing strategic work and 20% doing problem-solving* (HRD Professional, PUB).

In contrast, some participants believe that HRD's role focuses on the delivery of learning, not on strategic influence. As one participant claimed,

> *HRD are responsible for organizational learning, but the amount of influence they've been given in the past has been limited. It is going to increase, but it has been limited, and we need to be strategic about it* (HRD Professional, RAIL).

Despite the lack of strategic influence in some organizations, the HRD professionals claim their role does add value to the business.

Value-added

Value-added is concerned with the worthiness of HRD responsibilities to the business areas and stakeholders. Value is discussed in the context of what the function does.

> *I see the organization as my customer. The role of HRD is two-fold to deliver the needs of the individual and then the organization to decide what those needs are. To be the critical friend and to say actually, I don't think that's necessarily the way to go* (HRD Professional, HEI2).

The needs of individuals (i.e., employees) are about meeting their learning and development requirements. Professional learning and development courses are mandatory and elective training that employees are expected to complete between six months and a year. Employees engage with their learning online or onsite. Some digital platforms include Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning at HEI1 and IBM Electronic Staff Record at NHS1.

> *I think there's an obligation or an expectation in the learning and development team in my part of the business to offer up options, solutions, ideas, for people to do on an optional basis. We also look after all the technical training. Of course, some of that is mandatory and is competence-based. That's also our responsibility to offer that to the business* (HRD Professional, RAIL).

In facilitating HRD activity,

> *We are the 'custodians' of the service; we need to set the framework for others to operate within* (HRD Professional, HEI1).

Interestingly, these participants talked about how others perceive their role in the organization. The central point is that HRD is not well understood as a sole function because it is drawn to administrative duties and offering training solutions.

> *Not sure the NHS fully understands what OD is. I think they think it is still learning and development. Not sure how I describe it – a bit of L&D, HR and improvement. Not quite sure people get it. But when they are on the receiving end of it, they get it. Nine times out of ten, they feel it is worth their time* (HRD Professional, NHS2).

Another HRD Professional (RAIL) enforced this view from their organization,

> *We still have a long way to go because HRD still gets drawn to do more administrative duties like taking minutes in meetings and so on. However, we are also in a place where managers and their teams are trying to take ownership* (HRD Professional, RAIL).

Employee lifecycle

As explained in the previous section, HRD professionals focus on developing employees. They also consider how the employees are onboarded and developed through their lifetime in the organization.

Others discussed adding value to specific aspects of the employee life cycle.

> *We are adding value through the employee lifecycle. It is our role, and we take that very seriously to ensure that onboarding stage, people have onboarded accurately, so they can transition as smoothly as possible, and get on with their careers and have the resources to be able to do their job* (HRD Professional, HEI1).

The value of employee lifecycle has given HRD a seat at the table in some organizations. They can demonstrate the link between what they do and how this influence where the business is going.

> *We are definitely able to provide a good link between strategically, this is where we are going, and this is what happens operationally, and operationally this is what we need to do strategically. I think we sit really nicely in-between – the balance of the 2* (HRD Professional, NHS2).

However, being proactive and forward thinking has not always been the approach of the HRD function, according to a participant from HEI2.

> *Going back a few years, our seat at the table involved CMT and putting in CMT paper. In last 12-18 months improved substantially, seats that we have wanted are*

more readily available, e.g., now part leading a workstream looking at organizational behaviour (HRD Professional, HEI2).

Managers' and employees' perceptions of HRD's role

The common themes from managers and employees are: 'internal stakeholders' and 'operational role'.

Internal stakeholders

Most managers (n=7) perceive HRD's role as learning and development rather than the broader employee lifecycle. In their view, the role of HRD is to meet internal stakeholder needs through operational aspects of facilitating training and development. Further, the function updates the core skills of their teams, managing the online learning resources, reviewing performance, and auditing mandatory training.

This perspective is captured by a Manager (HEI2), who said,

> *HRD set up internal courses, recruit to internal courses and lead the Employee Engagement Committee* (Manager, HEI2).

The learning and development team supports stakeholders across the business to integrate training throughout the business areas. There are three objectives for collaborative working across the organizations (HEI1, NHS1, and RAIL). First, to identify the needs of the internal stakeholders. Second, to meet the strategic goals of the business, and third, to work efficiently. However, there is a need for HRD professionals to strengthen how they develop talent in organizations.

> *The learning and development team do meet our needs. They do a very good job, but they need to work alongside experienced nurses to understand that people absorb information differently* (Employee, NHS1).

Whilst HRD is considered a valuable function by managers, they argued that:

> *HRD does not have the profile they should have. It should be seen to be much more important. HRD is seen as the 'tinsel on the Christmas tree' – nice to have, but you can strip it off. Even the name OD/HRD; not sure that people know what that is. Learning and training is clearer, isn't it?* (Manager, HEI2).

Operational role

Managers' and employees' perceptions of HRD dominantly focus on the operational facets of the HRD function's role, specifically on the training they have received and wish to

undertake. Employees across the organizations have undertaken hard and soft skills training such as Customer Service training, Prevent, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Equality and Diversity, and Information Security. NHS1 has critical training for nurses, which is facilitated by nurses and ward managers. The core competency training is linked with their performance reviews. Despite the perception that HRD meet their operational role through training provisions, employees agree that there is a lack of understanding of what HRD does.

As one employee said

> *HRD need to shout louder in the Trust, promoting what they offer and what they can do – they do this but not enough* (Employee NHS2).

Others said they know where to go for training but only connect the training department with the overall learning process.

One participant said,

> *The only person that helps me with what training I need is my line manager. I don't know exactly how things work in the training department. I get told what training I need to do, but sometimes I get asked what I want to do. I learn so much from the training, but I want to move up the ladder but don't know when it will happen* (Employee, RAIL).

Interestingly, uncertainty about where to go for learning was noted by an employee (HEI2) who said, "

> *If I had a particular learning need in the university, short of asking my line manager, who I suspect might also not know, if I'm honest, I have no idea where to go. Absolutely no idea at all* (Employee, HEI2).

The suggestion from employees seemed to be that in some organizations HRD has sold itself as a strategic function but has not invested in the resources needed to cascade (and deliver) the strategy to operational levels.

> *Those people who make the strategy real for the people who need to deliver the actions that make the strategy happen are missing* (Employee HEI2).

A similar view is expressed by an employee (HEI2),

> *Not all those in HRD are strategic. Need bigger bandwidth and to think wider* (Employee, HEI2)*.*

Part of this approach is for HRD to think beyond the principal role of training. They are expected to be approachable and be forward thinking.

An employee (PUB) clearly articulates this view,

> *Sometimes don't feel that I can approach HR, don't want to be put in the 'red-room'. A colleague of mine wants to have some L&D support, their manager says no, is that the end of it? Can they take that conversation to HR and get some support and buy in from them? Don't think they would, so I question how accessible HR is?* (Employee, PUB).

Interestingly, one employee appears sympathetic about the enaction of HRD responsibilities.

> *If this stuff is being pushed out to line management, that's fine, but you have to give them the skill, the resource and the time to do it. If you're not going to do that, it ain't going to happen* (Employee, HEI1)*.*

In summary, the majority of HRD professionals believed that they have a strategic influence and work to improve the experience of employees through the employee lifecycle, and that this strategic influence has a positive impact on the learning culture of the organization. However, there is a lack of understanding from some of the key stakeholders (managers and employees) about the value that HRD offers. The managers and the employees felt that HRD professionals were supporting them (mostly) with their training and development needs but there was scope for them to operate more strategically. It seemed there was some dissatisfaction with HRD in respect of not being as proactive or as supportive as they had hoped. This created a disconnect between expectations and delivery, and ultimately tension. In summary, this demonstrated *confusion* from some of the key stakeholders about the value that HRD can offer, and their own lack of understanding of the *diffusion* of some HRD aspects of their own roles.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the most valuable aspects of HRD's role from the point of view of the HRD professionals and key stakeholders in UK organizations. This study has found differing perspectives of HRD roles from all participants. These conflicting views show what they believe is or should be the role of HRD professionals and, more importantly, the value that HRD creates. The length of experience could be a contributing factor in the perception of HRD's role. For instance, senior HRD professionals hold a more strategic perception of their contribution, and less experienced line managers having greater expectations for more

operational support. Similarly, employees with no HRD experience perceived HRD as an operational function for learning and development. There may well be other factors that contribute to the ambiguity, i.e., the length of time that HRD professionals have worked in their respective organizations, the extent of their established relationships, their experience and length of time in this or other HRD roles, etc.

As illustrated in figure 1, the perceptions are different between managers and employees versus HRD professionals. Managers believe that HRD's role is concerned with the provision of training and development both online and onsite, meeting stakeholders needs, and reviewing performance. Employees also share the same perspective about HRD's role with the addition of an assumed strategic influence. The employees acknowledge the principal role of HRD but argue that HRD is not strategic. The view of both employees and managers supports only in part Hamlin and Stewart's (2011) view that the purpose of HRD is "to improve or maximize effectiveness and performance at either the individual, group/team, and/or organizational level" (p. 213).

In contrast, HRD professionals perceived their role as primarily strategic, but only some operational aspects are mentioned in relation to the training aspects of the employee lifecycle and administration. The key differences seem to lie within the perceived value, positioning, and responsiveness of HRD in the organizations researched. As Alagaraja & Egan (2013) argued, the internal customer perceptions of the HRD role and responsibilities are crucial for assessing its value and effectiveness. HRD professionals believe they add value by influencing decisions at the senior management level and developing guidance for the organization's strategic needs, such as investing in people. For those for whom value is created (i.e., managers and employees), HRD is not seen as strategic because they are reactive, for example, organizing training courses when requested, not prompted.

Regarding positioning, HRD is a recognized term in all cases; however, for some, it is situated within the Learning and Development Team (n=2), so HRD is perceived as a process and not a function. In other organizations (n=2), HRM and HRD activities were distinct. Still, with some overlap whereby HRD was fulfilling some HRM responsibilities and others (n=2), HRD was split into specific functions (i.e., L&D, OD, and Training). HRD as a function seems to consider its position as a strategic one, but managers and employees are not seeing this; they are still expecting the 'old learning and development cycle service'. In terms of responsiveness, HRD professionals, despite their views of being more proactive and strategic, come across to the other critical stakeholders as having a more reactive approach rather than a proactive one. Linking back to Torraco and Lundgren's (2020)

review, perhaps this shows how HRD professionals feel they are aligned to the organization's strategy but, according to managers and employees they are less so, and instead more aligned with the operational, day-to-day business needs.
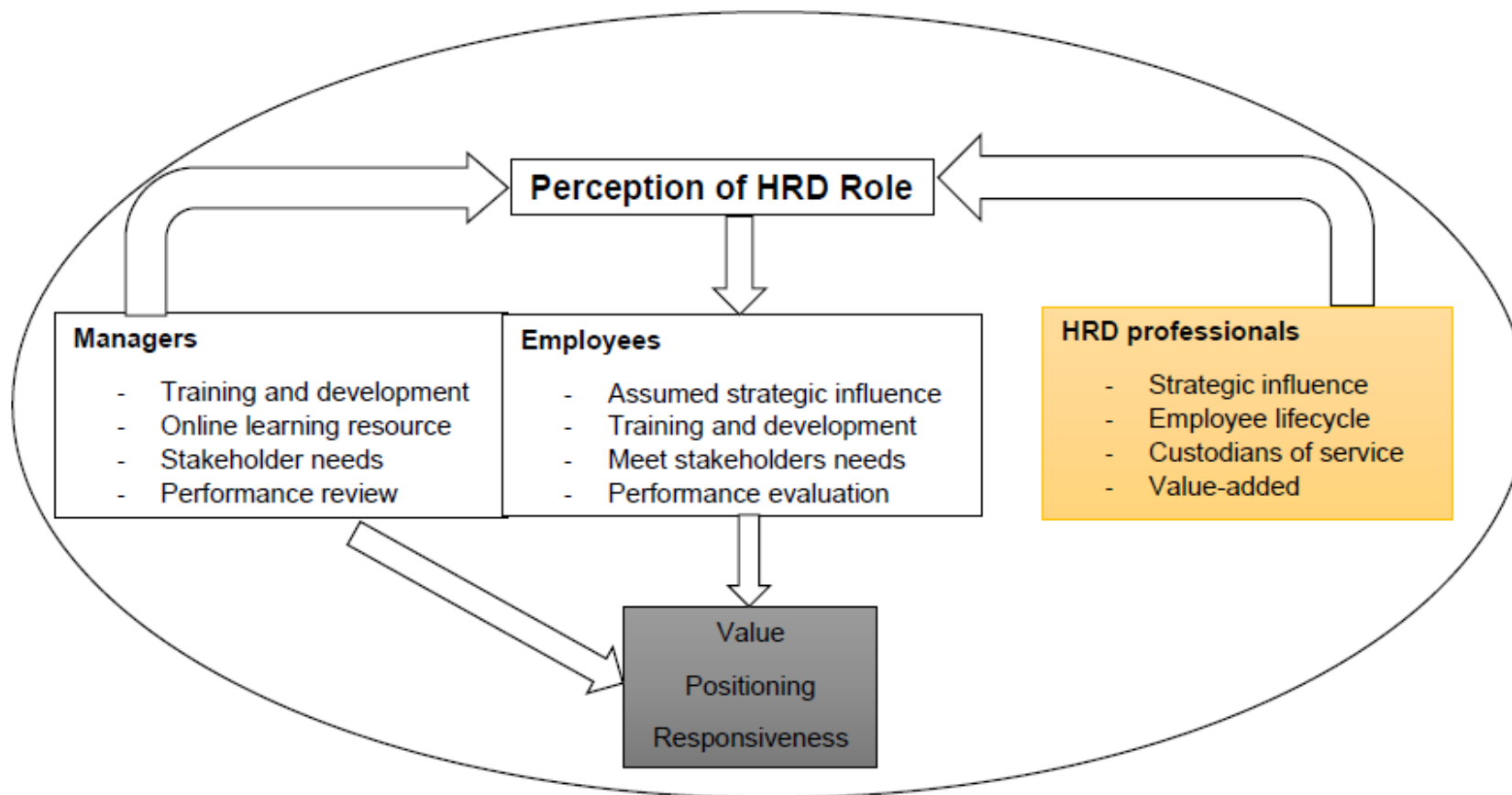
Figure 1. Stakeholder Perceptions of the HRD Role

Conclusion and Implications

This inductive inquiry extends existing research by exposing key stakeholders' perceptions of HRD's role in UK organizations. By exploring these perceptions, the paper determines how well HRD is meeting the needs of those it serves. Managers and employees have similar views about HRD's roles, but dissimilarity exists between these and the views of HRD professionals. These similarities and differences are centred on the perceived value of HRD, how the HRD function is positioned, and the responsiveness of HRD professionals to the organizational and internal stakeholder needs. This paper argues that a proactive HRD function could change the perception of internal stakeholders on positioning and responsiveness, thus minimizing potential tensions between the stakeholders.

Theoretical implications

There are two main theoretical contributions from the findings of the present inductive inquiry. This paper goes beyond discussing the role of HRD professionals (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011; Torraco & Lundgren, 2020) by exposing the perceived value of HRD from critical stakeholders. The paper identifies three distinct ideas that the perception of HRD is central to its value, positioning, and responsiveness. Value is affiliated with the training and development of staff. However, the tension is that there is a need for skills analysis and HRD to be out there across business areas. Therefore, value and positioning are intertwined.

Second, this study provides context-specific knowledge about the potential tensions caused by differing perceptions of HRD's role in UK organizations. The authors explored a diverse set of organizations across the public and private sectors, so this study does give clear insights into some of the patterns of differing perceptions by role, but due to the small sample of participants, it is not possible to generalize beyond these cases.

Implications for HRD professionals

The critical concern for HRD professionals is that there seems to be a disconnect between what they think they are doing and what other vital stakeholders think, but more importantly, what those others want them to do. In short, the implications for HRD professionals are twofold: i) to improve the understanding of the critical stakeholders in the organization concerning what those with HRD role responsibilities should be doing; and ii) developing the competence of the key stakeholders to facilitate (managers) HRD operational activities and to look for HRD related opportunities (employees) for themselves. With this in mind, the call to action for HRD professionals involves a refocus on value, positioning, and responsiveness.

On value, HRD professionals should clarify to all key stakeholders how they 'oil the wheels' of their activities in the organization, and how they create strategic value for all key stakeholders involved. Further, HRD professionals should revisit how they position their role in the organization. They should check, consult, and develop the title, the job description, and the scope of the role. Also, they need to take proactive steps to educate key stakeholders to recognize their contribution to HRD activities. This responsive act will enable them to manage stakeholders' expectations; make clear the scope of HRD's role and where to find additional HRD-related support. Finally, HRD professionals should find opportunities to develop an enhanced (strategic) alliance at all levels of the organization to build relationships, understand what is needed, and involve key stakeholders in the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of all key employee lifecycle aspects.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, this investigation does have its limitations. Some cases had no managers (HEI1 and RAIL) or HRD professionals (NHS1). Access to data collection was challenging because we began data collection in the first phase of the Covid pandemic national lockdown in 2020. Future research should consider information from all key stakeholders in different organizations. It would also be worth exploring the perception of HRD's role across various other organizations and wider throughout the UK. Given that the HRD function is influenced by and dependent on the host system within which it operates (Wang et al., 2017), a deductive study would provide objective evidence of the impact of the organizational and cultural context on employees' and managers' responsibilities, expectations, and perceptions.

As previously stated, further comparison between two other countries has been carried out, and similar themes emerged from the data. Still, the suggestion is to choose similar size organizations, sectors, and a similar set-up and labelling of the HRD function, to bring more profound insights in the future.

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