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ABSTRACT

This document contains three papers from a symposium on characteristics orientation, needs, and expectations. "Characteristics Orientation of Emerging Professions: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice of Continuing Professional Education" (William H. Young, Margot B. Weinstein) reports on a qualitative study that examined emerging professions in U.S. society through the characteristics orientation presented by Gilley and Eggland and related the implications to continuing professional education. Special attention was paid to the fields of information technology, real estate, and human resource development. "Managers' Needs and Expectations of Management Education" (Carole Elliot) presents the findings of a study that examined the relationship between six managers who were enrolled part-time in a masters of business administration program and their teachers. The study findings cast doubt on the effectiveness of large-scale programs of management development for individual managers that occur away from the workplace and the validity of more quantitative approaches to needs analysis that generalize management development needs. "Predicting Future Skill Needs in the Clothing Sector (Ian Taplin, Jonathan Winterton, Ruth Winterton) discusses a project during which future skill needs in the British clothing sector were identified as part of efforts to implement the British government's policy of averting skill shortages and remedying skill gaps. All three papers include substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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Characteristics Orientation, Needs and Expectations

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Characteristics Orientation of Emerging Professions: Implications for Research, Policy and Practice of Continuing Professional Education

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine emerging professions in American society through the characteristics orientation presented by Gilley and Eggland (1989), and relate the implications to Continuing Professional Education (CPE). The paper first defines the orientation. Second, it describes the fields of Information Technology, Real Estate, and HRD in relationship to the model, and third, it discusses the issues and trends for the research policy and practice of CPE.

Keywords: Professionals, Continuing Professional Education, Professionalization of HRD

"A central feature of North American societies in the 20th century has been the professionalization of their workforces" (Cervero, 1988, p. 3). It has been estimated that 25 percent of the American workforce claims membership in a profession (Cervero, 1988). There is little argument that professionals are central to the functioning of American society (Cervero, 1988; 2000; Houle, 1980; Curry, Wergin and Associates, 1993). Because of their importance in American society, it is assumed that professionals will continue to learn throughout their careers, and to meet this challenge, a tremendous amount of resources, both financial and human, are used to create education programs to improve practice for these practitioners (Cervero, 1988). These practitioners "present a picture of rapidly changing practice settings across the professions, and thus, the need for a continuing education response that is up to the task of preparing professionals for this world" (Cervero, 1998, p. x). Daley (2000) added, "although continuing professional education (CPE) has undergone significant changes in the past decades, yet there is little current literature that assists practitioners in developing an expanded understanding of the new issues, developing trends, and future needs of this important segment" p.1). Several authors believe that CPE providers can strengthen their programs by understanding the continuum from a pre-professional through professionalization in the literature (Gilley and Eggland, 1989; Young, 1998; Knox, 2000). The process practitioners, such as Human Resource Development (HRD), use to achieve professional status in American society as professions, and the trends and issues that arise for CPE is applicable to many if not all professions, and it will add to the literature of CPE (Gilley and Eggland, 1989; Young, 1998; Knox, 2000).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how the fields of Information Technology (IT), Real Estate (RE) and HRD attempt to achieve professional status in North American society through the "Characteristics Model" explained by Gilley and Eggland (1989). The three fields were chosen because they represent varying stages in the professionalization process, and the researchers believed that the findings would add to the literature on the issues and trends for the research policy and practice of CPE.

Theoretical Framework

Although sociologist have done extensive studies on professions, professionalism, and professionalization, defining the term "profession" is still a challenge (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001; Gilley and Eggland, 1989; Cervero, 1988). Three approaches have dominated the literature about professions and professionalization. First, is the process approach, it states that professions move at different speeds toward full professional status through a process. Second, is the trait approach; this approach explains that professions all share traits or characteristics in common, and professions reach full professional status when they acquire specific characteristics, and third, is the power approach, "which differentiates professions based on the power relationships held by practitioners in their social exchanges with society and individual clients" (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001, p 221).

While the terms are difficult to define, all the definitions include several elements that are consistent with other definitions of a profession (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). A profession must have four components: (1) a specialized body of knowledge, (2) a set of competencies, (3) common principles, and (4) dedicated to the public interests.

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Although there are many different definitions of the terminology in the literature, " the trait or characteristics approach has been the most commonly referenced in literature" (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001, p. 221). This approach is consistent with other definitions of a profession (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). Based on the importance of the occupation to American society, the occupation can be classified as: a profession, semi-profession, Para-profession, quasi-profession, skilled, and unskilled. Within each classification, there is a service component, "the difference between classifications of occupations is not the service itself, it is the nature of the service (Gilley and Galbraith, 1987). An examination of professions such as HRD by the characteristics orientation, can provide insight into the evolutionary process, issues and challenges faced by the profession to gain professional status (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001; Gilley and Galbraith, 1987). According to this orientation, for an occupation to be viewed as a profession in American society, it must contain eight characteristics, although the importance each occupation gives to a characteristic can vary from one occupation to another. The eight essential characteristics are:

1. A Code of Ethics. "Professional groups share a common set of knowledge and a code of ethics for the purpose of providing high-quality services to people and working toward the betterment of society" (Cervero, 1988).
2. An organized and accepted body of knowledge. Each profession must establish a set of core knowledge or theory that is the foundation professionals must learn in a profession.
3. Specialized skills or identified competencies. In addition to general concepts and theories that guide practice, Bratton (1984) stated professionals must have specialized competencies that enhance practitioners in six ways: (a) they provide practitioners with tools for self-assessment and professional growth, (b) they give a common set of concepts and vocabulary to improve communication among professionals and professional groups, (c) they provide information that can be used to develop professional programs, (d) "they can be used as a foundation for a certification program, (e) they provide employers with information to identify qualified applicants, and (f) they provide a basis for defining an emerging field of study (pp. 1-2).
4. Minimum education requirements for members.
5. Certification of the proficiency members must achieve. Gilley and Eggland (1989) stated that the certification criteria that is commonly used by these societies involves three types: Professional certification is a voluntary process that measures the competence of practitioners in a field by a professional association or organization. Accreditation is term used to describe the regulation of voluntary programs in a field, and is usually administered by an association or agency. Licensure is a required credential received by individuals and is administered by a governing group or political body in the field (Gilley and Eggland, 1989).
6. An orderly procedure in the fulfillment of responsibilities.
7. Opportunities for dissemination and discussion of ideas among members. This open communication usually happens through organizations, associations and education programs.
8. Enforcement of disciplines of the profession, and failure leads to "malpractice" and to be "out" of the professions" (Gilley and Eggland, 1989. p. 307).

Professionalization refers to "the process that professions go through to move from the status of an occupation to that of a profession in society" (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). According to Gilley and Eggland (1989), three areas are: "(a) knowledge/competency required of each member in order to participate in an occupation, (b) level of importance that society places on the occupation, (c) level of control members of the occupation place on others prior to entering and practicing the occupation" (p.300).

Continuing professional education (CPE) refers to the education of professional practitioners, regardless of their practice setting, that improves their learning and ability to practice throughout their careers" (Queeney, 2000).

The following fields are analyzed in relationship to these eight characteristics: IT, RE, and HRD and the trends and issues that arise from this study are related to research, policy and practice of CPE.

Research Questions

In order to gain insight into issues facing the field for professionalization, three general questions guided the study:

1. Why does the field want to achieve professionalization?
2. What are the issues facing the field for professionalization?
3. How could these themes be utilized to improve the policy, research and practice of CPE in the professions?

Methodology

The study used qualitative research methodology as a primary research design. The fundamental characteristics of qualitative research is its in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in its context (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This methodology allowed the researchers to explore the subject through formal and informal interviews, and gain new insights from the themes that emerged (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative research methodology was used for the research because an intensive description and analysis of the phenomenon would uncover the interplay of significant factors that are characteristic of the phenomenon (Merriam and Simpson, 1995). The three fields were chosen because they represent fields that are at different stages on a continuum towards professionalization. RE practitioners have enacted all eight characteristics, but the field has not yet reached profession status in society; HRD practitioners are attempting to reach professional status by establishing characteristics, and IT is in the beginning stages of deciding with its members whether or not the field should seek professionalization. As fields moved towards professionalization, the implications for CPE are many. By examining these three fields, it is hoped to shed light on the implications of the policy, practice, and research of CPE.

By means accorded in the methodology, 36 participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Six professionals and six educators were purposely selected in each of the three fields of IT, HR and RE. Participants characteristics were: (a) 18 men and 18 women, (b) between the ages of early thirties to early sixties, (b) who had each worked in the field for over ten years, (c) each had completed a minimum of a masters degree in their field, ten had a Ph.D., and (d) all took CPE regularly.

In addition to 12 formal taped interviews, 24 informal interviews, both face-to-face and telephone, were taped with consent of the participants. The research used structured, open-ended questions to explore participants' perceptions regarding the subject matter. The characteristics that emerged from the interviews were validated through documents, journals, a literature review and discussions with other professionals and educators in the field.

After the completion of the data analysis process, another phase of data analysis, a search for themes, was begun. The process used "concept mapping" (Smith and Associates, 1990) as a diagnostic tool. "A concept map depicts in a diagrammatic form, ideas, examples, relationships, and implications about a particular concept. The center or core idea is placed at the center or top of the page, and radiating from it are a number of spokes or lines leading to other concepts related to, or indicated of the central idea" (Smith and Associates, 1990, p. 49). Concept mapping enabled the researchers to group similar examples of large concepts together, and smaller concepts were set aside until they could be integrated into the larger themes; this process allowed the dominant themes to emerge from the data.

Limitations

Since the study was limited to interviews with 36 participants from the three professions of HRD, IT and RE, the study can not predict if this information is utilized by all emerging professions. The researchers believed that the insights gained in this study should be the first step to lead to further research on the subject.

Results and Findings

As indicated in the "Characteristics Model," in order for a field to become established as a profession, it must contain all eight characteristics. The three fields are presented based on where the field is on the continuum towards professionalization, beginning with the field of RE which has received the greatest number of characteristics, to the field of IT, which has established the least criterion as a profession. This section first presents the characteristics in each field, and then it provides a summary of the major findings from the research study.

Field of Real Estate Practitioner (RE)

Characteristics of the Field. Although the RE field has established all eight characteristics, the field has not yet been recognized as a profession in American society. A real estate practitioner is licensed by the state in which he/she practices, abides by all governmental rules and the code of ethics of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), and must take minimum education to acquire and maintain a license. NAR (2001) "has a membership of 750,000 real estate professionals, and it is the largest professional association in the United States" (p. 1). RE has a literature base that is accepted and utilized for licensure. Many university degree programs have been established throughout the country in the last 20 years with concentrations in finance, international RE, or some specialty field in RE; however, a degree based entirely on the field does not exist. RE, as in the other fields, has attempted for a number of years to obtain a consensus of opinions to determine its body of knowledge for university programs, but studies concluded that the body of

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knowledge in degree programs at universities varies tremendously from one degree to another (Rabianski and Black,1998; Epley, 1996; Weinstein, 1998). However, the field has a recognized knowledge base for licensure.

Summary of the Findings. All the participants interviewed in RE (12 out of 12) said they were interested in gaining professional status; they wanted the prestige, recognition and requirements for practitioners that comes with professionalism, and they believe that the field is doing everything in its power to establish itself as a profession. Participants said (12 out of 12) that there are two issues facing the field for acceptance as a profession: (1) The field has had difficulty in designing a knowledge base in a university that adequately responds to constant changes in specialized knowledge, technology, and expansion of its client's growth. Participants statements reflected thoughts in the literature on RE that the majority of academic research is out of touch with the practitioners and the industry, and in most cases conflicts with the information that practitioners in the industry really want (Souza, 2000; Weinstein, 1998). In order to define a body of knowledge in universities that is acceptable by all users in RE, there needs to be more research and discussion on the subject (Epley, 2000). (2) RE practitioners must continue to establish the connection of the value of their services to society as expressed in their code of ethics in NAR. "Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization" (NAR, 2001, p. 8). Participants commended NAR's efforts to move the field towards professionalization by passing a mandatory ethics training course for members. Beginning in January of 2001, REALTORS® are required to complete one course every three years specifically in CPE in ethics to maintain a license. "The purpose of this training is not only to promote the professionalism of REALTORS®, but also to protect the public" (NAR, 2001, p. 1). Since RE practitioners are viewed by the public as more interested in making money instead of providing service, participants said that it will still be difficult for the field to reach professional status in American society.

Field of Human Resource Development (HRD)

Characteristics of Field. HRD has created Standards and Ethics and Integrity that are an important milestone of the field towards evolution as a profession (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001). HRD has professional societies and associations that promote research and interchanges of ideas from its participants: the American Society for Personnel Administration (ASPA), the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) or the National Society of Performance and Instruction (NSPI). There are many degrees with concentrations in Human Resource Development, but they vary in many fundamental ways. Kuchinke (2001) analyzed data from 55 graduate programs in HRD; he found that HRD has not yet devised a core curriculum content. HRD has established several associations and societies to develop and implement professional certification procedures for their memberships to enhance professionalization. These programs were established to advance or increase the competency of practitioners within the field, mainly in areas of specialization as managers, instructors, instructional designers and consultants (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). Several HRD-related associations and societies have established professional certification procedures to enhance professionalization of the field (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). "The identified competencies can be used to develop guidelines, appropriate course work, internships, practicums, and independent projects" (Gilley and Eggland, 1989, p. 289).

Summary of Findings. The participants interviewed in HRD (12 out of 12) expressed a strong desire towards professionalization, and they said that the biggest obstacle for the field to become a profession lies on issues surrounding credentialing. Members need to agree on a basis for credentials, licensure and certifications. Due to the diversity of practitioners and areas of practice, generally participants (11 out of 12) believed that this presents a tremendous obstacle for the field. Furthermore, members in the field must first understand terminology, because confusion among the three terms accreditation, licensure, professional certification, creates enormous problems for practitioners. Practitioners often confuse the purpose, nature and delivery system related to each (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). Participants added further challenges for professionalization are: (1) Participants (12 out of 12) said that the field needs to better describe its service component to society to legitimize itself and its professionals. (2) Participants (11 out of 12) added that HRD must support a literature foundation that is accepted by the entire field, because "an HRD discipline around the proposed theories is fundamental to the maturation of the profession" (Swanson and Holton, 2001, p. 100). (3) Participants believed (12 out of 12) that more research should examine how to improve CPE on preceding subjects.

Field of Information Technology (IT)

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Characteristics of the Field. IT practitioners are part of the newest field in this study to examine whether the field should or should not attempt to gain professional status. IT practitioners are in demand in the workplace due to recent changes in technology that impact everyone's lives. As a result, there has been a tremendous increase in number of practitioners and education programs in the field. IT has two professional organizations: The Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) which has established a code of ethics for the profession, and the Association of Computing Machines (ACM). There are no licensure procedures in place in the field, and practitioners do not need a degree to practice. IT has a voluntary certification and re-certification program by The Institute of Certification of Computer Professionals. Several vendors offer certification programs such as Microsoft's NT operating system, application development, or one of several Microsoft products. The classes are taught by Microsoft certified instructors and a test must be taken by participants to receive the certification; these certifications are highly valued by employers (Branigan, 1998). A degree in IT or information technology is usually required for most starting positions in the field, although degrees in associated fields such as mathematics, accounting, or engineering, are occasionally accepted (Branigan, 1998). Many degree programs have been established within the last twenty years, but there is no consensus of what needs to be curriculum. With wide utilization of technology Curry, Wergin and Associates (1993) referred to computer sciences practitioners as professionals because the field requires collegial education that is based on special knowledge, and the field serves the social good. IT is referred to by Branigan (1998), "as a discrete profession that needs for "content-related continuing professional education, applicable certification, and continuing professional education that goes beyond the specific content-related material applied directly to the improvement of computer technology skills" (p. 331).

Summary of the Findings. Of the 12 participants in IT, four were not interested in the professionalization of the field. The four participants who were not interested in professionalization of IT, stated that they had entered the field to make money, and they felt that professionalization would lead to increased restrictions and costs to do business. They said that although most IT practitioners seek a degree or credential to obtain a position in the field, the content of the field is changing so rapidly that most IT practitioners have little interest in establishing themselves as professionals if it means that they must have licensure and CPE within a subscribed curriculum. The eight participants who were interested in IT seeking professionalization said it would improve the field in the following ways: (1) IT would increase the prestige, the training required to maintain a license and the quality of education programs. (2) Professionalism would force practitioners to take CPE to learn important information as stated by Armour and Fuhrman (1993) to: (a) learn critical thinking skills, (b) create context areas that are valuable in field (ethics), and (c) and become skilled at communication skills. Participants said the two biggest obstacles towards professionalization are: (1) IT must connect the field to a service component that is acceptable by society, and (2) IT must maintain a knowledge base in a university that adequately responds to constant changes in the specialized knowledge, technology and expansion of its clients' growth.

Table 1. *Synthesis of Characteristics of Professions.*

Characteristic	Real Estate	Human Resource Development	Information Technology
Ethics/states provides service to Society	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accepts a Body knowledge	Yes	No	No
Identified competencies for all	Yes for license	Yes only for some positions.	Yes only for some positions
Minimum education Requirements for members	Yes	Yes for some positions only.	Yes, for some positions only.
Certification Process	Yes	Yes by some programs	Yes for some specialties
Process to fulfill duties	Yes	No	No
Opportunities for interchange of ideas of members	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demand acceptance of dis ciplines, failure is to be "out" of field	Yes	No	No

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Conclusions and Recommendations

This section discusses the conclusions drawn from the study for professionalization and CPE.

First, generally participants interviewed (32 out of 36) believed that professionalization should be the goal for their field, and that CPE providers, professional organizations and societies need to continue to discuss the process and its implications for CPE. The study suggests that professionalization of the fields would increase the prestige and credibility for its members and insure better trained practitioners and educators who must follow ethics, principles and standards to remain in the field. Six participants from HRD expressed difficulty for AHRD to establish the necessary characteristics professionals due to the diversity of practitioners and specialties in the field. Four IT practitioners believed that professionalization of IT would decrease opportunities for work and profit, would result in unnecessary restrictions for practitioners and creation of education programs that can not keep pace with changes in the business. Second, participants (32 out of 36) stated that in order for their field to reach professional status, practitioners must support a code of ethics that clearly explains the value of its services to society and the standards and ethics that guide its practice. Participants believed that "Professional groups share a common set of knowledge and a code of ethics for the purpose of providing high-quality services to people and working toward the betterment of society" (Cervero, 1988). Participants constantly stated that in order for their field to move towards professionalization, it must define value to society though its service instead of profits. Although all three fields in this study have established a set of ethics, participants believe that the fields have not made a sufficient argument for the value of their services to society. Each field must do further research studies to define the value of its services to society, and to insure that members practice principles that guide their field. In addition, CPE should examine trends towards mandatory CPE in ethics in addition to other CPE as was instituted by RE this year.

Third, participants agreed (32 out of 36) that to establish itself as a profession, a field must subscribe to an accepted body of knowledge that has been established in universities. However, several participants said that in each field there are so many areas of practice and diverse participants, that it is an almost an impossible task to design one body of knowledge that is representative of the field. All participants felt that generally universities do not have the ability to link theory and practice and to adequately respond to constant changes in specialized knowledge, technology, and expansion of it client's growth; this thought was fervently expressed by IT participants. Therefore, CPE providers must improve how they design and update programs to link theory and practice and to keep knowledge current with practice.

Fourth, participants (35 from 36) believed that for practitioners to be successful in today's workplaces, a field must establish a set of competencies that improves the practice of professionals. They suggested that "Competencies should be performance oriented rather than academic oriented, reflect the skills of the experienced practitioners as opposed to the entry-level of individuals and be reflective of the skills of professionals such as HRD, regardless of their position, title or academic degree held" (Galbraith and Gilley, 1986, p. 28). Participants said that for CPE to play a major role in their ability for continued competence in their field, it must address the following two issues: First, "The greatest challenge facing CPE is to address the application of knowledge and skills within a practice context that must go beyond simply providing information and teaching technical procedures; it must help professionals build their collaborative judgment, reflective, and integrative capabilities, (Queeney, 2000, p. 379)." Therefore, participants believe that it is essential for CPE to teach such competencies as: team work, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, reflection-in-action, skills as defined by (Schon, 1987; Houle, 1980, Cervero, 1988). Cervero (1988) expressed concerns that artistry maybe different in different professions. Second, several participants (16 out of 36) stated that it would be beneficial for CPE to develop a continuum system of professional education to assist in education for professionals from pre-professional throughout their careers. This continuum could address difficult topics such as the evolution of expertise as expressed by Knox and others.

Fifth, participants agreed (32 out of 36) that a field must establish a certification process for professionals, professors, trainers and educators to establish professionalism. Generally, participants articulated thoughts in literature by Gilley and Eggland (1989) that certification programs assist in providing feedback and evaluation of the competencies and skills attained by those individuals aspiring to practice in a field. Members must first understand terminology, because confusion among the three terms accreditation, licensure, professional certification, creates enormous problems for practitioners. Especially in HRD, because practitioners often confuse the purpose, nature and delivery system related to each (Gilley and Eggland, 1989). Further arguments on the subject were: (a) Ten participants expressed there is an increased trend for practitioners to be required to take recognized programs at universities for licensure and re-licensure to be a professional. "Towards this aim, there will continued to be a movement towards a convergence to require more and more degrees for entrance to the field; many fields want to require a doctoral degree for entrance" (Curry, Wergin and Associates, 1993 p. 302). (b) Two participants said that there are other questions that must be answered around

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credentials in a field are as follows: Who would credential practitioners, and would instructors need the same credential as practitioners? What would be the minimum education requirements for members?

Finally, participants expect their associations, societies, governing bodies, and schools to play a vital role in their acceptance and maintenance to professional status; this has many implications for CPE . The majority of participants (33 from 36) added that with the knowledge explosion, new technologies, and increased calls for competence and accountability for professionals, there is a growing need for professional partnerships and collaboration across work settings to add to the research, literature, and education of practitioners. CPE providers need to join together to develop new strategies with employers, schools, professional associations, and/or regularly bodies and independent providers to provide improved CPE that ensures competent professional practice (Queeney, 2000; Curry et al., 1993).

Study Contributions to HRD

Although HRD professionals come from diverse disciplines, this research supports the literature in the field that most practitioners want to obtain professional status (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001; Swanson and Holton, 2001). Due to the efforts to increase the professionalization of HRD-related professional associations and societies, as well as to the importance placed on human resources with organizations, this research provides descriptive and comparative data on issues related to the professionalization of the field. By understanding where an area of work is on the continuum of becoming a profession as set forth by Gilley and Eggland and others, educators can more clearly understand the needs of the workers/professionals in the field. This understanding should lead to the development of educational strategies and programs to help people become and maintain themselves as professionals in a new and developing profession. This research supports literature that HRD should focus on the following areas: (1) "since HRD has developed a set of ethics and standards which will aid in development as a profession, a next step in this journey is for the Academy to use Standards to further commitment for members to act upon them" (Ruona and Rusaw, 2001 p. 227), (2) HRD must examine how it can better define its service component to society, (3) HRD must support a literature foundation of theories that is accepted by the entire field. "Fulfilling HRD's performance improvement mission through building the HRD discipline around the proposed theories is fundamental to the maturation of the profession" (Swanson and Holton, 2001, p. 100), and (4) HRD must proceed to establish certification procedures for members of HRD.

As people in a field such as HRD take the painstaking steps to bring an area of work into professional status, the education necessary for professional entry, professional maintenance, and professional growth changes dramatically. Professional entry education requirements change from no requirements to certificate or degree requirements. In many cases multiple certification and multiple degree requirements are required to enter a new and developing field. These educational changes set forth new expectations within the field and within the professionals themselves. Certification and degree requirements lead to the need for HRD via CPE for re-certification, licensure, and re-licensure. For the millions of people involved in RE, IT and HRD, transformations in the field will require more testing, more education, and more credentialing.

The road to professionalization is complex and demanding for the people involved in the transition of an area of work to a profession. The complexity can involve components that don't appear in the literature in any big way yet are very important to the development of a profession. For example, the field of information technology has mystery attached to it and; therefore, may move much faster into full professional status. Fields such as real estate move at a much slower pace because all of us at one time or another become a client and receive the services of these workers/professionals. This familiarity can bring about a condition in which there is little respect for people we have to work with frequently than judges, clergy, professors, and physicians.

However, it is estimated that billions a dollars per year are used on education of these groups from pre-continuing education through CPE, attention must be paid to establishing education programs that will aid all fields in practice (Cervero, 2000; Knox, 2000). As HRD continues to strive for acceptance as profession, the information from this research on other emerging professions can provide valuable insight to the research, policy and practice of HRD.

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Managers' Needs and Expectations of Management Education

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This paper presents the findings of the first-stage of qualitative longitudinal research into the relationship between managers (as students) and educators. The paper discusses the needs of six managers on a part-time MBA programme, and their expectations of it. The findings that emerge pose a number of dilemmas for this particular form of adult education, including a questioning of the effectiveness of large-scale programmes of management development for individual managers that occur away from the workplace, and the role of assessment for adult learners.

Keywords: Management Education, Needs and Expectations, Qualitative Research

Within the last 10 to 15 years there has been a debate within UK and European management education circles concerning the purposes of management education programmes; particularly generalist programmes such as the MBA. Alvesson and Willmott (1992) position the Critical Management Studies (CMS) field as running counter to disciplines of management that "are generally understood to be devoted to the (scientific) improvement of managerial practice and the functioning of organizations" (p.1). CMS by contrast seeks to question "the wisdom of taking the neutrality or virtue of management as self-evident or unproblematical" (p. 1). Those who locate themselves within CMS emphasise the necessity of questioning the received wisdom of traditional management knowledge and practices given the influence that managers as a social group exercise. It challenges, from a number of theoretical perspectives, the existence of a body of objective scientific knowledge within disciplines of management that purports to be morally neutral and universally applicable. Critical Theory provides the basis for many contributions to it, but analyses from Foucaldian, poststructuralist, Marxist and feminist perspectives are also common. Their point of commonality can perhaps be seen to lie in a common 'agenda', described as "an agenda for research, teaching and (indirectly) organizational practice that understands management as a political, cultural, and ideological phenomenon" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 8).

The research that this paper describes arose out of a CMS perspective, but approaches it from the position of individual managers who choose to undertake a management education programme, the content of which has been so heavily critiqued within the CMS literature. Little attention so far has been paid within CMS to managers as individual students. Managerial identity in general, with a few exceptions, e.g. Fox (1987), Watson (1994), Pavlica & Thorpe (1998), Watson & Harris (1999), has remained essentially hidden beneath their 'role', i.e. what they are reported to do as paid-for work. Management as a practice, as a technical and instrumental activity, has predominated. Managers have therefore come to be seen in this light, this characterization reaching its (most famous) nadir in Jackall (1988) and MacIntyre (1985), their individuality here having been completely obfuscated by their role. These characterizations have provided part of the contextual background for my research, which from the beginning was concerned with individual experiences and responses to an MBA programme. It is only from a position such as this, I argue, that CMS can justifiably support its assumptions concerning management education's role and purpose, particularly as perceived by those who seek to participate in it.

Whilst the research focuses on the relationship between students and educators within management education, the findings that arise are equally pertinent to HRD. Indeed, it is partly because HRD has not addressed the management education phenomenon that I bring this paper to the conference. I do not have the space here to discuss the artificiality of constructing boundaries between HRD and other areas of research, but what I hope this presentation of a specific student-educator relationship will do is to raise awareness of the expectations that adult education can create.

Purpose and Research Questions

This paper's purpose is to share the findings from the first stage of a longer empirical study. The research was undertaken to explore the relationship between managers (as students) and a process of management education. Specific objectives that were posed in this first stage of a four-stage research process were:

1) To discover why, and how, managers had embarked on a management education programme;
2) To explore their work-life leading up to the point they started the management education programme;

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3) To find out about their previous experiences of education.

Subsequent stages of the research address in more depth issues raised during this first stage, including: managers' responses to programme content and design (including assessment procedures, and managers' perspectives on the transferability of their MBA learning to the workplace); the nature of the reception given to managers in their workplaces by colleagues not engaging in processes of higher education, and managers' future career aspirations.

Theoretical Framework

When designing the research approach I wished to take, my intention was to be lead by the data that arose from the findings. When I began I therefore did not have a particular organising framework against which I would analyse the findings. This decision, as a consequence, requires me to place my own findings in the context of other theoretical perspectives once the analytical process has been completed.

Methodology

This piece of research was exploratory in a subject area that has hitherto received little attention. The findings that I present in this paper arose from qualitative face-to-face interviews with six managers, interviewed separately. These took place within the first three months of a part-time MBA programme in a UK university. Whilst the interviews might be described as semi-structured, in that I had a number of key questions I wished to explore with interviewees, these questions were predominantly used as prompts to facilitate the conversation in this first meeting with the managers. My aim within each interview was to follow as much as possible the direction in which the interviewee wished to take it. That is, I wished the interview to be more akin to a conversation, in which meaning arose out of the dialogue between the interviewee and myself. I therefore attempted to approach each interview in isolation. That is, none of the interviews were analysed until all six interviews of each phase had been completed.

The conceptualisation of a dialogical process (in this case the interview setting) as creator of meaning is crucial, not just to the choice of method to gather empirical data, but is indicative of the epistemological basis of the research as a whole. That is, it is located within a social constructionist framework that recognises the influence of the research process on the nature of the data that arises. As such, it recognises the influence of the researcher on the researched, acknowledging that the research intervention is constructed not just by the researcher, but arises from the interaction between researcher and researched. It is characterised by the notion of reflexivity that requires researchers to be aware of the impact of their interventions. For example, in this study the managers knew I worked for the university where they were studying for the MBA (although I did not work on the MBA programme), thus I was conscious that this might affect the nature of the conversation between us. I continually posed myself questions such as how open would they be in critiquing the programme, or even the educators who worked on the programme? Another question focused on my own practice as researcher. I had to acknowledge that my other role as educator within the same university would impose certain assumptions on my conduct within interviews and my subsequent analysis of them.

Analysis

Recognising that my dual role as educator and researcher within the same institution imposed certain constraints, alongside the longitudinal nature of the research, I chose what might be described as a grounded theory 'approach' to the analysis of the data. That is, unlike a 'pure' grounded theory analysis, I did not begin the analysis with the belief that I would be able to do so completely free of theoretical assumptions. This would run counter to the epistemological basis of the research. In trying to manage the tension between a rejection of hypothesis testing against the recognition that the researcher brings certain assumptions to any empirical research intervention, I followed Hycner's (1985) guidelines to the phenomenological analysis of interview data. This involves several steps: transcribing the interview; bracketing as much as possible my own meanings and interpretations; listening to the interview for a sense of the whole; delineating units of general meaning; delineating units of meaning relevant to the general research question; determining themes from clusters of meaning; writing a summary for each individual interview. I added the extra step of comparing themes that arose within each separate interview, looking for commonalities and dissonances.

Upon completion of each phase of interviews (the findings presented in this paper arise from phase one only; there were four phases in total), I analysed the data before I interviewed managers in the next phase.

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Findings: Routes to the MBA

I will now outline themes that arose from the first set of interviews, particularly within the context of questions regarding their journey along the path to the MBA. I describe these as: developing the work self; validating career choices; the business of organising; work as shaper of educational choice; plugging the gap, and anxieties. The theme that was common to all managers concerned the development of the working self.

Developing the Work Self

Broadly, the interviewees' educational experiences can be described as either having been 'front-ended' by tertiary education prior to entry to the workplace, or a more evolving experience that has occurred mostly in response to work-based activities. Having recognised this as a general pattern, upon a closer examination of the interviewees' working and educational lives we can see that the picture is much less clearly defined than this. So, even though one manager (CD) had entered the workforce with an undergraduate degree, and one seemingly suited for the type of work he was to be engaged in, he had undertaken another form of education to develop himself for his work role. This theme of self-development as a response to work activities, and as a means to improve oneself in the performance of these work activities, is a theme common to all interviewees. Indeed, this was occurring long before they had considered an MBA as the next stage in the self-development process. Also striking is the fact that in all cases the interviewees sought to develop their work selves through education of their own accord. MT describes his reasons for choosing to study part-time for a law degree:

To cut a very long story short, I got a job reluctantly. I didn't want to go - (I went) kicking and screaming - as a decision maker. And on traffic matters originally and eventually I became more expert and got involved in criminal offences and had good working relationships with CPS (Crown Prosecution Service), got on quite well, and they said to me – "you ever thought of doing this as a job?" I said well 'yes'. "Why don't you do a law degree?" That's how it came about and I said 'yes, I think I will'.

Indeed, some even faced opposition from line managers when they expressed a desire to do so. PD describes his experience:

That was my choice (to do his first degree in mechanical engineering on a part-time basis). *Nobody mentioned it. And actually at the time, my boss at that time – he was Oxford or Cambridge – from one of the two, couldn't really understand why I was doing a degree and probably thought it was insignificant anyway because it was from a red-brick university. So again, it was my decision and really there was no support for what I was doing so I had to do that.*

CS's decision to move from being a practicing nurse to a nurse tutor required her to follow a teaching course. When I asked her reasons for doing so, she answered:

Well, I was health visiting, and I was dealing with people who were diabetic and there was a lot of teaching within that, teaching groups, teaching individuals, teaching staff, and it suddenly occurred to me that that was what I really liked doing and that was what I was good at. And from there I just decided that I would do a teaching course. So I did. I have no regrets. I enjoyed it and I have enjoyed being a teacher.

For only two of the interviewees was the MBA the first experience of a formal course of education since they had entered the workforce. JB was the most formally qualified of the interviewees, being the holder of both an MSc and a PhD, and had been in salaried employment for just four years. JW held a first degree and a PGCE and was currently working as a teacher within higher education in a management school.

A formal educational qualification as an outcome of working experiences was common to four of the interviewees, they were now brought together by a programme of management education. The diversity of work and educational experiences was notable, even within a group of six. The question as to how individuals with such wide-ranging experiences could all be undertaking the same management education programme is an interesting conundrum. I think it actually lies at the heart of the critiques from CMS concerning the role and nature of management education, and is a debate that needs to be more fully informed from the perspective of participants in these programmes.

Before doing so I would like to present in fuller detail some features of their working lives so far, focussing particularly on the choices and decisions they made regarding the shaping of their life in their organisation(s).

Validating Career Choices

In asking about interviewees' working lives up to the point of beginning the MBA, I wanted to discover the sorts of working backgrounds somebody choosing to do an MBA might have. I did not want only to discover the basic facts that could be gleaned from a CV, I wanted to hear them describe these working backgrounds and how these had lead them to the MBA.

My assumption before I began the interviews was that each interviewee would have worked for at least two, possibly three, organisations. My views had been formed by knowledge of the changing nature of the implicit employment contract that began in the 1980's following organisational 'downsizings', 're-engineering', and layoffs that has changed the central organizing principle of individual-organizational relations. This has lead to regularly expressed mantras in the media and within the academic literature concerning the death of 'one-company man', and the demise of a job for life'. Correspondingly, the working patterns of 'high flyers' (which those undertaking a part-time MBA might reasonably be considered to be) are characterised as generally involving stays of 2-3 years in an organisation before moving out, and 'up', the career ladder. This assumption was not borne out by the experience of the interviewees and so what became more interesting – and this arose only through the data analysis process – was individuals' validation of the decision, or more specifically series of decisions, that lead them to stay in the same organisation. I want to focus on this theme because it is interesting from a number of perspectives. First, it provides a mirror to contemporary perceptions of careers as being 'boundaryless'. Second, when analysing the interviews on paper, as well as listening to my tape recordings of them, I came away with the impression that interviewees felt the need to justify their decision to stay in one organisation. This was strongest amongst interviewees who worked within large organisations. They did so by explicitly pointing out the diversity of roles and types of working activities it was possible to engage in within these organisations. Those working in large organisations provided similar responses when I asked about their plans once they had completed the MBA; that is, did they plan to stay in the same organisation, or did they see the MBA as facilitating a route out of the organisation?

Following a question from me in which I simply wanted to verify whether he had worked for the same company since leaving school, PD replied:

> *Seventeen years, man and boy. I don't know, but I think the company, I think the company is good to work for anyway but it has been – so much has happened in that – I was doing an apprenticeship so that kept me there for four years, then I got the job in the design office, so really it is a change. And I enjoy the change, so I stayed for a couple of years. But before that couple of years was up, I started my degree so that kept me there for another five years. And then after the degree I got promoted and I have had another promotion since, so things seem to roll over and I have worked in different areas within the design office, or the project office as it is, so it's sort of – there's no time I feel that I've spent a lot of time stagnating – and that's probably why I don't feel as if I needed to move, because things are continually moving.*

In the process of a much longer passage in which he described the various work roles he had performed since entering an organisation that re-processes nuclear waste, as a graduate management trainee, CD stated:

> *I was a shop(floor) manager proper in fuel storage points – that's where I really cut my teeth I suppose, in Ops Management, and it's from there I went into 'Lowe' commissioning the chemical plant then, so that took me six years to get a Chemical Engineering job. But there we are, it was all good experience on the way and it's very handy I think, albeit limited to 'Byacar' – it's such a big place anyway, I have got a good grasp of 'Byacar' – whereas some of the people have just got 'whatever they do', which is useful ... it's just another way of broadening your horizons a bit. Not that that was a conscious plan at the time but with hindsight it is quite good really.*

Choosing the MBA: The Business of Organising

The reasons each interviewee provided for undertaking the MBA did vary, and all stated a variety of reasons for choosing to do so. Nevertheless there were some overarching themes. A response common to two interviewees who worked in the public sector framed part of their decision in terms of their work, and the work of their organisation, in the light of business (that is, profit making organisations) methods of organising.

When I asked CS to describe the nature of her job more fully, she explained:

> *We have very few HEFCE-funded courses. We have to get out there, basically, into the market-place, and earn our money. You know, bring the business in.*

Later in the interview, she described the 'problem' the Faculty she was employed in had with her role:

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...the rest of the Faculty, has a great problem with my role in that they don't even now, sort of two years on, really – well, I think they do understand the funding stream – but they don't understand how tenuous it is and how, how much competition there is. And what will happen if we don't actually get the, keep the business that we've got and generate more business. ...

In response to my question about the number of student places funded by HEFCE, she replied:

...we have service level agreements with the (Health) Trusts so we do have a certain level of guaranteed business but in 1999 that is going to go. And you know, we are out on the old market.

As part of the interview in which MT was discussing his reasons for undertaking the MBA, in preference to going further with his legal studies, he replied:

... it's business training you need now ... so I have done the wrong degree really in some ways.

When I checked with him his thoughts on why he needed business training, his view was:

It has to happen. I mean, there's been, hasn't there, up until now, my understanding is we had a very narrow look on business management and business cultures applied to profit making commercial organisations. 'Why should they? Because they ... you know, wherever there's money involved, wherever there's strategy involved, wherever there's an efficient method of working you know, relating your business or company to the environment we are working in, those rules apply to whether it's commercial or non-profit making. And that's why we've changed, and the phenomenal cost of policing.

Work as Shaper of Educational Choice

What was a far more common response continues the theme I identified earlier in the paper that saw work as an impetus and shaper of educational choice. Most had relatively recently moved into new work roles, and most were seeking a body of knowledge and skills to support them in these new roles. Some were quite explicit about the knowledge and skills they hoped to gain. JW and CD for example, were looking for different ways of thinking through former and current work experiences.

Each interviewee had chosen personally to come on the programme, and some referred to the fact that they did not actually need the MBA to perform their work role. Rather, it was undertaken for a variety of reasons linked to their self-development needs, including – stated most explicitly by CS – as a means to increase confidence in performing her role.

JB had been working in product development, but was about to move into a marketing role, where he was looking to obtain some commercial experience that he felt he needed. His view was that he had come into his organisation too academically qualified, and believed the organisation had probably taken a risk when they appointed him, as "he could have been the archetypal boffin". He had proved that he wasn't and explained his reasons for doing the MBA:

I must admit my personal reasons for doing it are not to get three letters. They're to get the training.

When I asked whether this meant it was for personal development reasons, his reply was:

Yes, absolutely, absolutely. You know, I couldn't condone sort of doing a course, and just getting letters and not actually getting anything out of it.

He saw this approach to the programme as having some negative consequences however:

So, I think probably I'm putting too much into the assignments, or certainly too much background reading, which may cause me problems.

PD saw his move into a management role as the way he wished to develop his career, and believed the MBA would help him do this. His boss had wanted him to look at specialist Masters course in the field of mechanical engineering, however he stuck with the MBA as:

... if I ever wanted to get beyond that (a level above his current position) I would then have to, at a later date, come back and do an MBA. So the MBA offered me the managerial type of (or I felt it did, I have yet to fully understand what it is going to offer me!), but I felt with my limited knowledge that it would give me an advantage, ... it gave me an advantage to develop a career from where it is now.

In contrast to JB and PD, CD explicitly mentioned the management roles he had been performing for the last eight to nine years at Byacar. He was seeking to move away from working in operations after a ten-year period, and was looking to the MBA to:

... look at things you don't normally look at in your job; i.e. think at another level, which makes you more adaptable and more useful to the organisation if you like.

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He didn't particularly see the MBA as being able to help him become a better operations manager. The one way in which it could do that would be to provide him with better "people skills":

And I don't get any of that off of this, other than sort of anecdotal help from other people in the lectures.

Similarly to CD, CS did not think she actually needed the MBA to do her current job and had not begun the MBA with a view to leaving her organisation. Her boss had remarked to her:

Do you really want to do this? You function perfectly well.

However, CS felt unprepared for her work both professionally and academically, and

... because the market is changing and because I think HE is changing really, and because I want to stay employable, I decided that I would do something about it.

In response to her boss's comments above, CS explained:

... I talked to her about it and I said I think it is to do with the way that I feel about what I am doing and the way that I feel about my position with people who are also doing the same sort of jobs as I am. I want to able to hold my own.

She felt the MBA was giving her more credibility with colleagues, and even after the first module thought:

I've looked at things differently just from doing that, and I feel that I, I don't know I just feel as if I've got something to back up what I am trying to say to the staff. Nothing that they would notice, I don't think, but it's the way ... it's the way I am looking at things and the way I am presenting things and the way I feel inside.

JW had worked for seven to eight years in business consultancy, and thought he understood in his "own language" the issues and processes he had been dealing with. His reason for doing the MBA was then:

... to try and learn some of the, I think, some frameworks on which to try and take five or six years' experience and say well, how does this all fit together picture ... and so what I hope it will do is provide me with a much better, not necessarily strategic, but a much better overall view of the business world.

MT described his reasons for doing the MBA as:

I want to do what I'm doing now more successfully, more professionally. The real reason is that I do genuinely want to improve my knowledge of business management. That's the truth of it.

Plugging the Gap

From this section we can see that the MBA is perceived as being able to fulfil a variety of needs. PD most clearly, but also JB, saw it as being particularly useful for their career development. It was seen to open up opportunities for career development, development here framed in terms of being an expansion of experiences, rather than upward promotion. This can be seen by their desire to seek further knowledge and skills. The variety of needs the MBA is being required to fulfil ranges from developing conceptual thinking skills to providing specific knowledge about private sector methods of organising. Whatever the specific reasons, all interviewees perceive a feeling of absence of some kind that needs to be rectified. The most common absence is of knowledge. CS is the most open about the MBA's potential to provide her with more credibility amongst colleagues, but it also lies beneath the surface of other comments. PD is the one most clearly moving into a management role, in this case from an engineering background. But he would still be moving into this role even without the MBA. The MBA was not a precondition for this change in role; indeed his boss suggested that he consider pursuing a specialist Masters degree in his disciplinary field. Both JB and CD were about to move, or had just moved, to new work roles in their organisations. They too however, had been operating as managers before that, including responsibility for a number of staff. One of the key issues arising from the reasons given by interviewees for pursing an MBA is the sense that they lack something.

An awareness of the contingent nature of managerial work, in which a predominant role for managers lies in the management of meaning (Watson, 1994; Elliott & Reynolds, 2001; Cunliffe, 2001; Shotter & Cunliffe, 2001), raises our awareness of the uncertainty of managers' lives. The findings arising from this research highlight that this uncertainty can overflow into perceptions of absence, or perhaps we can even say inadequacy that then carries some managers to seek succour and refuge in a university-based programme of management education. Whilst the majority of CMS writers recognise the complex and contingent nature of managers' lives, they have not considered the consequences and impact of this lack of certainty upon management education and upon educators. If this particular manifestation of uncertainty identifies, at least in part, managers on management education programmes then this correspondingly has implications for the management educators from whom they are seeking guidance.

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Anxieties

There are other concerns amongst the interviewees that we can perhaps categorise under the 'insecurities' heading. The ones I will present here are more specifically related to perceptions of the expectations placed on them by the programme itself. Many of these were unsurprising in that they related to concerns about the amount of time required to complete coursework, and MT and CS particularly were concerned about neglecting their families. MT states:

> *But I think about it (the MBA) with the kids, if something happened to them or happened to me, I'd regret it. ... So, I've got to be honest about it, yeah, but when I'm at Lancaster, particularly when I hear the lecturers talking ... they just attract my interest, I've got to say. So when I get there, I want to be part of it, you know.*

One of PD's anxieties concerned the switch he was making from an engineering background to the MBA in which he had identified (the interview took place during the first module on Strategic Management) the lack of a certain answer:

> *You get a few possibilities out, and those possibilities might be right, they might be wrong, they might work, they might not work. But it's not, it's not whatever you want to call it, it's not really the definitive answer, which engineering is. So it's moving completely away from what I've done before. It's very sort of in-depth, an analysis, and coming out with opinions rather than doing some calculations and coming out with a figure, an answer.*

For CS, it was the high expectations and high standards she had for herself.

> *... and even though I sit here and say, I don't care what mark I get for my assignments as long as I pass, that is a lie. That is a lie, I would be devastated!*

Underpinning CS's concern about level of marks lie questions about marking criteria and expectations from educators about what is required from a piece of coursework. JB felt he needed this information in order to judge his own understandings:

> *I'll have less anxieties after the first assignment has been marked and I'll know exactly whether I'm pointing in this direction, or whether I'm pointing in this direction. Erm, you know, in terms of what's required. I'm finding it quite difficult to ... it's different to a report I'd write in industry.*

We can detect a certain air of vulnerability from these responses. Concerns about assessment alongside interviewees' search for missing knowledge, skills or belief in their abilities as mentioned earlier, reveal a heady brew of expectation.

It is beyond the remit of this research to ponder whether the particular group of management educators working on this programme were aware of any one of these factors. But what it can do is to consider the relationship between managers and management educators through the perspectives offered by the six interviewees. A number of issues arise from this. First, it reveals perspectives on the processes of management education – processes traditionally managed by educators – from the position of the manager-student. Second, and implicated in CMS's hitherto relative lack of attention to management education processes (Reynolds, 1999), it considers the objectives of management education as perceived by the manager-student. That is, what they expect to gain from engaging in this particular type of education programme. Third, the level of reflection from manager-students on pedagogical processes prompts significant questions around CMS's claims against management education.

Concluding Thoughts and Implications for HRD

This research into managers' motivations for undertaking a management education programme, and their expectations of it, raises a number of questions for educators and for HRD practitioners. As a process of adult education it reminds all educators that each individual adult, as student, returns to education with needs and expectations not always transparently evident to educators. Indeed, it is only by adopting an idiographic research approach that it is possible to begin to become aware of these needs and expectations. The findings reveal the large amount of commitment expended by managers in order to develop themselves for current and future work roles that reminds educators of their enormous responsibility in the relationship with adult learners, and warn us that assumptions about them require continuous challenge. The questions this raises for HRD include: the effectiveness for individual managers of large-scale programmes of management development that occur away from the workplace; the validity of more quantitative approaches to needs analysis that generalise and thus possibly miss the needs of all. Also questioned is the appropriateness for adult learners of methods of assessment generally based on conventional methods of assessment for undergraduate students. In subsequent phases of the research I will explore with managers their responses to systems of assessment. This is a little explored area, but asks educators whether current ways of assessing learning are fulfilling adult learners' needs, or rather simply fulfilling institutional bureaucratic demands.

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Predicting Future Skill Needs in the Clothing Sector

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Clothing enterprises are still experiencing chronic skill shortages, despite the continued contraction of the sector and evidence that training is associated with business success. This paper reports on a project predicting future skill needs in the British clothing sector undertaken to implement the Government's policies to avert skills shortages and remedy skills gaps.

Keywords: Forecasting, Performance, Recruiting

Recognising that the UK workforce is inadequately qualified in comparison with major competitor nations, the Labour Government that took office in 1997 introduced several initiatives to address future skills needs. The Skills Task Force was established to assist in developing a National Skills Agenda and the Learning and Skills Council was established to develop more coherence in post-compulsory learning. At sector level, National Training Organisations (NTOs) were charged with responsibility to establish mechanisms for forecasting future skill needs (*Skills Foresight*). This paper reports on such an initiative in the British clothing industry, which the authors were commissioned to undertake on behalf of CAPTIB Trust, the NTO for the British apparel manufacturing industry.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this project derives from two sources. The first is an ongoing analysis of contemporary change in garment manufacturing (Taplin and Winterton, 1996; 1997; 2001) which provided a framework for examining the trajectories of restructuring and their impact on skills. The key drivers of change (product market fragmentation, liberalization, leading to import penetration, and de-regulation, leading to growth in the number of SMEs, which further intensifies competition) are represented as a range of external environmental influences acting upon clothing enterprises. Market fragmentation is driving the demand for quality and creating more demanding delivery requirements from retailers, while at the same time creating gaps in the market that manufacturers and importers can exploit. The globalisation of clothing markets, promoted by liberalisation in phasing out the Multi-Fibre Agreement, will act as an impulse that accelerates the restructuring of garment manufacture in high wage economies. Similarly, deregulation from the mid-1980s provided a permissive environment for start-up of SMEs and these offered similar low-cost, flexibility production to manufacturers and retailers by replicating within the indigenous industry some of the characteristics of overseas enterprises.

These external impulses impose limitations to the strategies that enterprises can adopt, modifying and accentuating the three imperatives that form intermediate objectives for enterprises in any market economy: quality, delivery and cost. The impulses having the most dramatic effect on the clothing industry are undoubtedly those that are exacerbating price competition, especially the growth of import penetration, promoted by liberalization. The growth in outward processing trade (OPT) reflects an inevitable response to overseas low-wage competition, whereby UK manufacturers can retain market share in the face of imports by outsourcing production. An alternative strategy involves sub-contracting production cut-make-and-trim (CMT) units competing largely on cost for a shrinking market. The delivery imperative is also addressed by sub-contracting production to small shops performing only a limited range of sewing operations and to home-workers, or through quick response and just-in-time methods that reduce production time and inventory. The quality imperative has led quality initiatives and team working, and forms a key part of niche marketing whereby companies have sought to exploit market fragmentation through focused differentiation.

The second source of theoretical underpinning is in the new skills strategy of the UK Government. The three

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reports of the *Skills Task Force* (STF, 1998; 1999; 2000) supported with research by the *Skills Task Force Research Group* highlighted skills shortages and skills gaps in the UK economy. As a key part of the new skills strategy, NTOs were charged with responsibility for predicting future skills needs at sector level through a *Skills Foresight* approach, elaborated in guidance from the NTO National Council (NTONC, 1999). This paper reports on the exercise undertaken on behalf of the clothing sector, which employed the theoretical framework and methodological approach laid down for *Skills Foresight*.

Research Questions

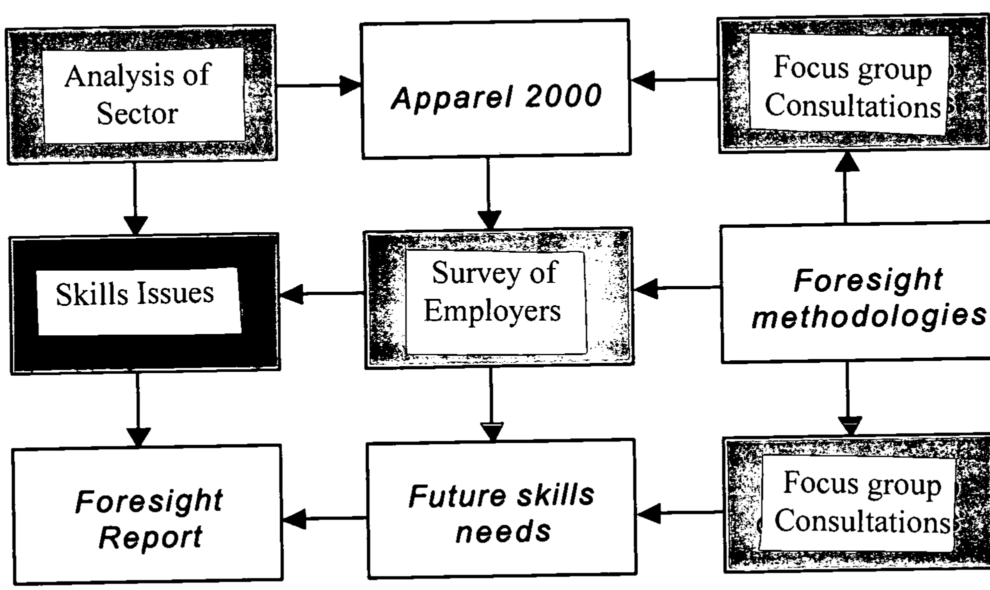
The central question addressed by the *Skills Foresight* exercise was: 'In what skills areas of the clothing industry are there likely to be skills shortages and/or skills gaps in the future, and which of these are likely to be the most detrimental to the industry's future success?' This question, set by Government to all NTOs, was reformulated into three sub-questions, operationalised through the methodology described in the following section:

- What skills shortages and gaps currently exist, and which have the most detrimental impact on the sector?
- What changes are occurring in the sector which impact directly or indirectly on skill levels?
- How is the current picture of skills shortages likely to change in the future?

Methodology

The methodologies adopted in *Skills Foresight for the Clothing Industry* were a product of the good practice principles identified from the review of other sector *Foresight* studies and the limitations imposed by the resources available. The resultant methodological approach recommended and adopted comprised three main elements, each associated with an interim report. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the different elements.

Figure 1. *Methodology for CAPITB Trust Skills Foresight*



Source: Winterton, J. and Winterton, R. (2001) *Skills Foresight for the Clothing Industry*, CAPITB Trust Skills Foresight, Bingley: Eldwick Research Associates.

Each element of the *Skills Foresight* project resulted in an interim report to CAPITB Trust. The analysis of the sector, resulting in the first interim report *Apparel 2000: The UK Clothing Industry in Transition* (Callaghan, Taplin and Winterton, 2000), identified a number of drivers of change and anticipated changes in skill needs, which were

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raised in the employer survey and focus group consultations. The review of methodologies used in other sectors, summarised in the second interim report, *Foresight Methodologies* (Leman, Winterton and Winterton, 2000a), influenced the approach adopted in the two main data gathering activities, the survey and consultation exercises.

The survey was undertaken as a telephone questionnaire administered on our behalf by a professional organisation with a target of 1,000 respondents, representing about one fifth of the number of enterprises in the sector. In addition to establishing a profile of the enterprises involved, the survey elicited a wide range of information about workforce characteristics, recruitment and recruitment difficulties, workforce skills (especially gaps and actual or anticipated shortages), future change drivers and their expected impact on skills and training activity. In the event, 1,022 enterprises participated in the survey, which covered 20,843 employees in the clothing industry, representing approximately 20 per cent of the estimated total number of employees. Findings from the employer survey were summarised in the third interim report, *Future Skill Needs in the Clothing Sector* (Leman, Winterton and Winterton, 2000b).

Discussions in focus group consultations with employers were structured to validate the findings from the analysis of the sector and the employer survey, as well as to elicit further information from employers as the beginning of an iterative process of forecasting skills needs. Validation with sector representatives was the main means of ensuring that skills forecasting in clothing was thoroughly grounded in the specifics of the sector. The validation process began with early dissemination at a *National Clothing Conference* and continued through discussion in focus groups of the change drivers outlined in *Apparel 2000* and of our interpretation of the LMI survey results in *Future Skill Needs*. In all, six focus groups were held across the UK in November and December 2000 and supplementary information was obtained from 6 individual interviews with employers in London. Excluding the Conference, the consultation process involved a total of 31 employers and 4 industry advisors.

The final report, *Skills Foresight for the Clothing Industry* (Winterton and Winterton, 2001) integrated the analyses of the three interim reports with the findings of an employer consultation exercise involving focus groups and individual interviews. The final report was used by CAPITB Trust to develop a *Workforce Development Plan* for 2001-2005 (CAPITB Trust, 2001).

Results and Findings

The research questions outlined above were addressed through developing a substantial amount of labour market information, only a small fraction of which can be presented here. Rather than presenting the results as a series of answers to the research questions posed at the outset, it is more logical to deal with the main findings from the different elements of the exercise integrated together thematically under the following headings:

- The clothing industry in transition
- Labour market characteristics
- Recruitment and recruitment difficulties
- Workforce skills
- Training activity

The Clothing Industry in Transition

The sector analysis identified key drivers of change in the clothing industry (deregulation leading to intensified international competition and increased imports, product market fragmentation leading to smaller production runs and shorter delivery times, and consumer demand for quality and value). In the employer survey, respondents were asked to identify which of these (or other) factors were likely to affect their business in the future. The five factors rated most highly were: import penetration; lack of skilled staff; changes in consumer tastes; quality issues; and local price competition. The survey captured employers' views on the levels of significance of each factor and the findings indicate a generally high level of concern about almost all future influences, especially import penetration, lack of skilled staff and quality issues. Training issues were relatively neglected in employers' responses. Import penetration was rated by the largest number of respondents and with the highest significance rating among all the given list of possible factors. One third of employers regarded quality issues as significant to the future of their business.

Employers also felt strongly about the impact of lack of skilled staff on their business in the future. However, it was surprising that approximately one third of those currently experiencing some kind of skill shortage (current vacancies, experience of hard to fill vacancies or skills gaps) did *not* rate lack of skilled staff as having an impact on the business in the future. The proportion of employers citing lack of skilled staff as having a major impact on the future of the business increased with firm size from 32 per cent (under 5 employees) to 60 per cent (25-99 employees). For the largest firm size of at least 100 employees, lack of skilled staff was cited by 53 per cent of respondents.

Although a large proportion of respondents regarded lack of skilled staff as important, far fewer chose the two factors addressing training issues. Compared with the 42 per cent of employers who perceived future skill shortage to be significant to their business, only 18 per cent thought funding for training was important in the future and only 17 per cent mentioned availability of training provision.

Employers were asked about skills that are lacking in parts of the present workforce and the main skills priorities were found to be similar across all the occupational areas, demonstrating that all respondents envisage skills priorities for the immediate short-term future to be very similar to present shortage areas. It is noticeable that IT is perceived as having a slightly less prominent role in the future, for all occupational areas, and has disappeared from the top three for trainees. Job-related skills on the other hand have become even more critical than before.

Labour Market Characteristics

Apparel 2000 traced recent changes in total employment in the clothing industry, comparing these with manufacturing as a whole, while the employer survey reported in *Future Skill Needs in the Clothing Sector* provided an up-to-date snapshot of the sample surveyed. Combining the two analyses provides an overview of the employment structure, demographic profile and occupational structure of the UK clothing industry.

While employment in the UK clothing industry has fallen since 1973, the rate of contraction accelerated in 1999 as production was increasingly sourced from abroad due to the strength of Sterling. Official projections for the sector (textiles and clothing) have consistently under-estimated the decline. The survey covered 20,843 employees in the clothing industry representing approximately 20 per cent of the estimated total number of employees. Around 60 per cent of employees in the sample were drawn from three regions: the North West, East Midlands, and West Midlands; 23 per cent of employees in the sample were in Yorkshire and Humberside, London and Scotland; 17 per cent were distributed amongst the remaining six regional areas.

In demographic terms, clothing remains an industry with a mainly female workforce: women account for 70 per cent of the workforce in the official statistics (the reverse of manufacturing as a whole in which men account for 70 per cent of the workforce) and represented 69 per cent of the workforce in the survey. In the official figures, 16 per cent are part-time while in the survey the corresponding figure was 18 per cent. In terms of occupational structure, 61 per cent of employees were classed as operatives or manual workers, 16 per cent were in managing or supervisory occupations, 4 per cent were technical specialists and 1 per cent trainees.

Recruitment and Recruitment Difficulties

Respondents in the *Skills Foresight* survey were asked about recruitment methods, future recruitment plans, current and past vacancies and recruitment difficulties. The number employed by the 1,022 companies in the survey had increased by 5 per cent on the previous year's figures, with 37 per cent of companies accounting for the increase. These firms represent 73 per cent of firms with current vacancies, 71 per cent of those with hard to fill vacancies and 60 per cent of those anticipating recruitment difficulties. The key recruitment methods are: word of mouth (67 per cent); the Employment Service or Job Centre (42 per cent); and local press advertising (42 per cent).

Of the 1,022 firms in the survey, 17 per cent (33 per cent of the workforce), currently had vacancies; 22 per cent (35 per cent of the workforce) had experienced difficulties in filling vacancies. In the 247 firms that expected to recruit more staff, 64 per cent referred to sewing machinists; 10 per cent sales staff; 9 per cent hand-craft-tailors; 6 per cent cutters; 5 per cent designers.

Among the 220 organisations that had experienced difficulties in filling vacancies, 177 anticipated further difficulties. Recruitment of sewing machinists had caused most difficulty (73 per cent) and was expected to continue to do so in the future (68 per cent). Future difficulties were also expected in the recruitment of handcraft tailors (18 per cent), cutters (6 per cent) and pressers (5 per cent). Of a total of 826 hard to fill vacancies, 75 per cent were sewing machinists, 4 per cent were cutters, 3 per cent were pressers and 3 per cent were handcraft tailors. The main reasons for such vacancies being hard to fill were: lack of applicants with the requisite qualifications and skill (42 per cent); lack of applicants interested in this type of work (33 per cent); lack of applicants with the required working experience (26 per cent).

Firms anticipating recruitment difficulties over the next two years represented 17 per cent of firms (25 per cent of employment). Of these, 49 per cent had current vacancies and 66 per cent had experienced difficulty in filling vacancies. More white-owned firms anticipated recruitment difficulties (21 per cent), than firms with non-white owners (10 per cent). The effect of recruitment difficulties on current business performance was considered to be

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significant by 55 per cent, noticeable by 15 per cent and negligible by 28 per cent. The major effects were: loss of business orders (48 per cent); restricting future business development (28 per cent); missed deadlines (24 per cent); and increased work in progress (13 per cent). To combat difficulties in filling vacancies, 43 per cent of companies surveyed had increased recruitment efforts; 16 per cent had retrained staff; and 23 per cent reported no action whatsoever.

It was a recurrent theme during the employer consultations that skills shortages and recruitment difficulties were part of a wider problem of labour turnover and retention, or that high labour turnover reflected the difficulty of recruiting skilled workers. Most clothing employers expected to provide on-the-job training, even for experienced sewing machinists, to get them suitably skilled to work on specific products. The main difficulty was attracting workers with the potential to learn and retaining them long enough to recoup the investment in training.

Workforce Skills

Respondents were asked a range of questions concerning workforce skills: whether skills needs are changing; the nature of skills gaps in existing employers; and the extent of multi-skilling. All respondents were asked whether the level or range of skills required to do the job was increasing or decreasing. Over all occupations, 42 per cent of firms felt that skills needs were increasing and 10 per cent felt that they were decreasing. Skill demands were thought to be increasing most significantly for apprentices/trainees, garment technologists, engineering technicians, IT specialists, managers and designers.

The tendency to report increasing skills needs is related positively to company size. Thus, 63 per cent of companies with 100 or more employees reported increasing skills needs compared with 40-41 per cent of enterprises in each of the three size bands employing fewer than 25 employees. In the smaller enterprises, for example, the key occupations in which increased skill needs are anticipated are the owner managers or directors and, to a lesser extent, sewing machinists.

The general perception seems to be that both the level and range of skills needed to perform a variety of occupations is increasing, yet of the 1,022 companies participating in the survey, only a very small proportion of those employing in specified occupations reported *gaps* between skills of the employees and those that the organisation needs to meet its future business objectives. The specific occupational categories mentioned were: sewing machinists (13 per cent); white-collar employees (9 per cent); supervisors (9 per cent).

The effects that respondents expected these skill gaps to have on their business operation included: loss of quality (32 per cent); loss of business/orders (29 per cent); restriction of future business development (28 per cent); increased work in progress (26 per cent); increased running costs (25 per cent). In the 124 establishments where initiatives had been taken to combat skills gaps, these included: training in house (53 per cent); recruiting staff with the required skills (14 per cent); using outside consultants/providers (11 per cent); or taking no action at all (19 per cent).

Extensive multi-skilling has already been introduced. Of the total sample, only 11 per cent of firms had no multi-skilled employees. The occupational areas where multi-skilling was the highest were: sewing machinists (45 per cent); owner managers (45 per cent); directors (12 per cent); cutters (12 per cent). Occupations in which there was less reported multi-skilling included highly specialised areas, such as handcraft tailors and designers, where multi-skilling could amount to a dilution of the skills deployed. Sewing machinists were again the main occupational category identified by respondents that intended to extend multi-skilling, with 22 per cent of firms targeting this group. Other occupations identified were: owner managers (8 per cent); cutters (6 per cent); and packers (6 per cent).

The survey was intended to identify the areas in which future skills need to be developed in order to support business strategies. Therefore, employers' views on a range of generic and job-specific skills across all the occupational areas were explored. Respondents were asked to choose up to three occupational areas and identify up to two of the key (i.e. most important) skills that employees in these would require in the future. The highest number of respondents regarded job-specific skills as critical for the future. This applies across all occupational areas, although is less evident in the managerial occupations. Business or management skills are the second most important and proportionately high even in operative and manual areas. The core skills of literacy and numeracy are regarded as very minimal in terms of future priority.

Training Activity

The rationale of *Skills Foresight* is 'to provide a structured way of thinking about future skill needs, to help meet them.' An important part of this approach involves examining the match between current training demand and provision, thereby providing information to help NTOs plan and coordinate training initiatives to meet the future skills needs of employers.

Despite evidence of the value of training and development from the *People Skills Scoreboard* (Winterton and Winterton, 2000), the BMG Survey confirmed the level of training activity in the sector is generally low. Overall, 3,492 full-time permanent employees in the sample workforce received on-the-job and 979 off-the-job training, representing 16.6 per cent and 4.7 per cent of the total sample workforce respectively. Of the companies surveyed, 77 per cent had not provided any kind of training in the past 12 months; 23 per cent had undertaken some kind of training (either on-the-job or off-the-job or both) in the past year; 20 per cent had provided on-the-job training; and 9 per cent had undertaken off-the-job training. Training activity is clearly related to firm size; firms with at least 100 employees are three times as likely to train as those with fewer than 25 employees and over ten times as likely to train as those with fewer than 5 employees.

For every category of skill shortage difficulty, less than half of those companies with difficulties had undertaken any training in the past year. Of those reporting no difficulty, a much smaller proportion had undertaken training. As might be expected, companies that had current or hard-to-fill vacancies, skills gaps or anticipated recruitment difficulties were doing more training than those who did not. It is surprising that training levels are not higher for those companies experiencing or expected to experience skills shortages. Respondents were asked about expenditure on training in the past 12 months, but 52 per cent were unable or unwilling to provide information on such expenditure.

Respondents from organisations that had provided on-the-job or off-the-job training in the previous 12 months were asked whether there were any barriers to the amount of training undertaken by specific occupational groups within their firm. Three key barriers were identified: within each occupation, the factor regarded as a barrier by the highest proportion of employers was cost of training to the business; this was followed by the cost of releasing the employee, for all but technical staff; and the times of day when courses are run.

Respondents were asked to identify those occupations for which either on-the-job or off-the-job training had been provided over the past 12 months. Of the 222 enterprises that responded, the highest proportion provided training for: sewing machinists; sales staff; white-collar staff and pressers. More than 50 per cent of employers also mentioned training provided for: managers; supervisors; engineering technicians; packers and cutters. The three main occupations for which respondents identified skills gaps (sewing machinists, white-collar employees and supervisors) feature among those in receipt of training.

Respondents were asked what skills had been developed through training in relation to broad occupational groups. Overall, specific job-related skills have been the main target of training across all occupational groups, and especially for supervisors, operatives and trainees, but significant other skills were evident in most groups. IT skills were mentioned by a higher proportion of employers than job-related skills for management, technical specialists and other staff, and were second only to job-related skills in the other categories.

The question on future training was concerned with whether those who had undergone training over the past year were likely to continue it in the future. For on-the-job training, 84 per cent of respondents expected it to either increase or remain the same as last year. Only 7 per cent expected the volume of training to decreas e. For off-the-job training, 70 per cent expected it to either increase or remain the same as last year, while 10 per cent thought it would decrease. Overall, therefore, respondents expected that training activity in the coming year would be at least as high as, and probably higher than, the past 12 months.

Respondents were questioned regarding their awareness of various UK industry/business initiatives aimed at generating access to funding for training and development of employees. Although knowledge of NVQs/SVQs, *Investors in People*, *New Deal for Young People*, *New Deal for Adults*, and *Modern Apprenticeships* and *National Traineeships* was relatively high, 21 per cent of the sample had heard of none of the initiatives outlined. When asked which of these initiatives had been useful to the business: 73 per cent felt that none of them had been useful; 12 per cent thought NVQ/SVQs had been useful to the business; 6 per cent cited *Investors in People;* 5 per cent *New Deal for Adults;* 4 per cent *New Deal for Young People;* 4 per cent *Modern Apprenticeships* or *National Traineeships.* Of the 471 firms that had heard of *Investors in People*, only 15 enterprises (3 per cent) had achieved the award, 33 companies (7 per cent) were working towards the award, 50 per cent were not interested in achieving *Investors in People.*

Conclusions and Recommendations

The *Skills Foresight* analysis identified serious recruitment difficulties, skills gaps and skills shortages in the clothing industry, despite the job losses of recent mo nths. Moreover, the study confirmed a reluctance to train in the face of difficulties with labour retention (Bond *et al*, 1999) creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of skills shortages and skills gaps. In specific terms, the study demonstrated that clothing employers need support in developing the skills needed for the future, and the following specific recommendations were made:

- The training and development of apprentices and other trainees should be more extensive to meet the increasing skill demands of their jobs. The use of new training media should be encouraged and special attention should be directed to induction and transfer of skills from training to production.
- Although multi-skilling is already extensive, more operatives, especially sewing machinists, should be multi-skilled. Moreover, even within enterprises that have already introduced multi-skilling, both the breadth and depth of skills should be developed further. Operatives need training for team working and in quality processes as well as empowerment and time management skills.
- Designers need more training in the use of new technologies and, crucially, in the technical aspects of fabrics, garment technology and production. The key skills are those needed to translate designs into production. Retraining and conversion courses for designers should be introduced to address an acute shortage of garment technologists and an apparent oversupply of fashion designers in the labour market.
- Managers, and especially owner-managers in smaller enterprises, need better access to training in ICT, leadership, delegation and 'people skills' as well as job-specific clothing production skills. There is a need to introduce innovative forms of training at work to minimize absence. Management learning should focus on the skills necessary for the operation of the restructured global organisation, particularly developing competence in international trading, importing and exporting, dealing with clients, using new ICT, marketing and communication skills.

Contribution to New Knowledge in HRD

The *Skills Foresight* project was designed to meet the immediate needs of the sector for information about current and future skills shortages and skills gaps. To the extent that little labour market information of sufficient detail existed prior to the exercise, it achieved its objective of generating new knowledge as the basis for the sector *Workforce Development Plan*. In addition, the project made a wider contribution both in substantive and methodological terms to forecasting future skill needs.

Substantive Contribution

The UK clothing industry, in common with garment making in other high-wage economies, is in decline, yet despite making substantial numbers of skilled clothing workers redundant in recent years, employers report widespread skills shortages, difficulties in recruitment and chronic labour turnover. Moreover, the two main survival strategies, outsourcing and niche marketing, are each beset with skills problems. Enterprises that have developed outsourcing strategies and are therefore less dependent upon traditional production skills inside the organisation, are nonetheless experiencing skills gaps, especially among managers, who must now deal with networked organisations and different cultures. Enterprises, such as parts of the London fashion industry, that have succeeded in developing high quality, high-value added niche markets, have potential for growth and sustainable profitability, but their expansion is equally hampered by skills shortages and recruitment difficulties. Overall, the situation is made more serious by inadequate HRD strategies and the prevalent self-fulfilling prophesy among the industry's leaders that investment in training cannot be recouped because of high labour turnover. Acute skills shortages, skills gaps and inadequate HRD, coupled with recruitment and retention problems, may be construed as symptoms of 'market failure', because if labour markets operated according to theoretical models, employers facing skills shortages and skills gaps would provide training to meet future needs and develop strategies to retain skilled labour. Since those participating in the survey and focus groups represent the more progressive and aware managers in the sector, there is evidently an urgent need for intervention and planning at sector level.

Methodological Contribution

In methodological terms, the project has taken further the qualitative methods first used in an earlier study of the future skills needs of managers (Winterton, 2001), demonstrating their generic utility in exploring detailed skills issues at sector level. The study also demonstrated both the efficacy and necessity of using a sector-based restructuring model as a framework to structure discussions on contemporary change and future skills needs. Moreover, the research has shown the value of combining qualitative empirical findings with quantitative labour market information, enriching and at the same time validating the survey evidence. There is, nonetheless, an important caveat to be made. If the management respondents reporting anticipated skills shortages and skills gaps appear to be doing little to alleviate them, can we be sure that their perceptions are reliable?

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