

## Devolving HRM and HRD to line managers: The Case of Hilton International's UK Hotels

Gillian Maxwell  
Glasgow Caledonian University

Sandra Watson  
Napier University

*This paper explores line manager responsibility for human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) in an international hotel organisation. The results identify a strong support system for line managers in relation to training and good relations with HR specialists. However, less evident is senior management support coupled with barriers in relation to philosophical understanding, time and work pressures, which are acting as inhibitors to line management's commitment to HRM and HRD.*

Keywords: HRM & HRD, Line Managers, Devolvement

In 2001 Hilton introduced, from a UK launch, a global quality initiative linking HRM and HRD to their strategic business objectives. The service quality initiative seeks to establish a service brand (Equilibrium) and service culture (Esprit/Hilton moments), with support from an HRM package of employment terms and conditions (Esprit). Esprit is portrayed as being a concept of directing the way employees work. It is defined within Hilton as 'a promise on how our colleagues are treated within the Company' (UK HR vice-president). It consists of a range of HR activities that are designed to ensure that employees are able to support the service quality initiative of Equilibrium 'a promise on how our guests are treated' (UK HR vice-president).

Esprit has been designed to embrace the key principles of employee recognition, respect and reward. It 'starts with recruitment but relies more on appropriate [employee] development... Esprit training aims to change behaviours to deliver Hilton moments' (UK HR vice-president). Upon successful completion of training, employees become members of Esprit entitling them to access rewards and incentives. Extra rewards can be given to employees who demonstrate excellent customer service. Hotels are provided with annual targets for Esprit membership numbers and these are measured as part of the hotel's performance indicators. Although initiated by Hilton's corporate Human Resource department in the UK, Hilton perceive this initiative as being concerned with instilling a service culture throughout the organisation, believing this to be owned by all Hilton employees. Managers' response to Esprit generally is perceived to be very positive. The UK HR vice-president indicates that 'There has always been good acceptance of the theory around people however when a name and description is given managers like this and are given clarity.' However, one of the key challenges concerns embedding Esprit into the organisation. It is 'about "walking the talk" - managers have to live this concept day in and day out e.g. in the way they speak/behave/interact'. The UK HR vice president reports that 'very few challenges were experienced around acceptance however there are still some around ownership - Who owns Esprit? Esprit should live in the hotels and they should determine recognition rather than being seen as a Head Office initiative'. In attempting to ensure that Esprit is operationalised effectively, all line managers in hotels are expected to assume responsibility for it through a range of human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) activities, with support from specialist HR staff. These include selection, training and development, employee motivation and recognition, and performance management.

This paper explores the extent to which the Esprit HR initiative has been embedded into the Hilton organization by examining line managers understanding of their role, including their involvement and commitment to HRM and HRD activities. Within the organisation there is no differentiation between the functions of HRM and HRD. These are seen as being integrated activities within the umbrella title of Human Resources. As a result of this approach, it is necessary to review literature that addresses the role of line managers from both HRM and HRD perspectives.

### Theoretical Framework

Relationships between line managers, HRM and HRD are arguably changing (Gibb, 2003) and becoming more fused, despite continuing debate about the focus of HRM (Budhwar, 2000) and scope of HRD (Garavan et al., 1999). Such is the challenge in defining the connections between HRM and HRD, the relationship has been dubbed 'ambiguous and elusive' (Mankin, 2003). Perhaps reflecting this challenge, the literature on these two

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areas largely treats HRM and HRD separately though they share some characteristics. In building a theoretical underpinning for the empirical work, this paper explores line manager responsibility for HRM and HRD in turn.

Inherent in the concept of human resource management (HRM) is a 'centre-stage' role for line managers (Renwick, 2003:262). Since the advent of human resource management (HRM) in the UK in the 1980s there has been some debate about devolving aspects of HRM to line managers (Gennard and Kelly, 1997). This debate intensified in the 1990s as conscious moves were made to attribute HR activities to line managers (Hall and Torrington, 1998). Several researchers assert that line managers assuming some HRM responsibility can positively influence employee commitment and, ultimately, business performance. For example Cunningham and Hyman (1997:9) highlight the role of line managers in promoting an 'integrative culture of employee management through line management.' Thornhill and Saunders (1998) signal the role of line managers in securing employee commitment to quality, while increased productivity has also been asserted as a basis for devolution of HRM (IRS Employment Review, 1995).

However, lining up line manager responsibility for HRM has also been noted as being 'problematic' (McGovern *et al.*, 1997), not least in the relationship between line managers and HRM specialists (Cunningham and Hyman, 1997) and 'the ability and willingness of line managers to carry out HR tasks properly' (Renwick and MacNeil, 2002:407). Some commentators were more positive in seeing the HR role becoming 'less pigeon-holed' (Goodhart, 1993). Hall and Torrington's (1998) research on the progress of devolution of operational HRM activities and its consequences, points to organisations making sustained and deliberate efforts to vest HRM responsibility with line managers. However, 'the absence of a designated human resource specialist role' (Thornhill and Saunders, 1998:474) may have negative effects on strategic integration and, consequently, organisational commitment, flexibility and quality.

Similarly, the involvement of line managers in HRD has been the subject of some academic debate and organisational challenges. For example Gibb (2003) asserts that concerns over increased line manager involvement in HRD are valid in that it may limit the use of specialist resources in HRD. Another issue is that while line managers have been identified as 'one of the key stakeholders with the HRD process' (Heraty and Morley, 1995:31), difficulties in securing line manager acceptance of HRD responsibilities have been evident (Ashton, 1983). In clarifying the role of line managers in HRD Heraty and Morley (1995) present that activities surrounding identification of training needs, deciding who should be trained and undertaking direct training either fall within the domain of line managers or in partnership with HR specialists. Whereas aspects of HRD concerned with policy formulation, training plans and advising on strategy are more likely to be undertaken by HRD specialists. However, research has identified factors that may enable and inhibit the take-up of line manager responsibility for HRD.

Arguably the most significant enabler of line manager responsibility for HRD is the 'growing body of literature on the emergence and growth of HRD and in particular HRD with a strategic focus' (Garavan *et al.*, 1995:4). HRD may be seen as providing the key connection between HRM and business strategy (Garavan *et al.*, 2001). Business-led approaches to HRD can indeed be evidenced (Sparrow and Pettigrew, 1988; Harrison, 1993), lending weight to the theory on HRD. For Torraco and Swanson (1995), HRD is not only supportive of, but central to, business strategy. It is also, as Keep (1989) maintains, central to HRM. Therefore it can be seen that there are important lines to be drawn between HRM, HRD, line managers and business strategy. McCracken and Wallace's (2000) authoritative model of the characteristics of strategic HRD indicates that all four of these factors can be lined up. In this model they are expressed as: integration with organisational missions and goals; HRD plans and policies; line manager commitment and involvement; and complementary HRM activities.

In terms of enabling HRD at an operational level, de Jong *et al.*'s (1999:183) research suggests that this is 'a feasible option' providing specific conditions are met in organisations. One significant condition may be the credibility of HRD as an organisational activity in general. For despite the relatively recent interest in, and expansion of, HRD in UK organisations, there seems to be a residual issue of credibility of the training and development function in organisations generally (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2001). Organisational support for line managers in their HRD responsibility is important too in the facilitation of the devolution of HRD responsibility (Heraty and Morley, 1995), as is senior managers' understanding of training and development issues (de Jong *et al.*, 1999). Trust between line managers and HRD specialists, is another important enabler (Garavan *et al.*, 1993). Lastly, as emphasised by de Jong *et al.* (1999), line managers acting as role models in demonstrating commitment to HRD in their operational tasks, may be a powerful enabler of HRD.

On the other hand, a number of barriers to the effective delegation of HRD responsibility have been recognised. One potential issue that is conceivably acute in the hotel sector is the pressure of short-term imperatives (Tsui, 1987) that may squeeze out HRD activities for line managers. This factor, in combination with a lack of training in HRD, may minimise the priority of HRD for line managers (Aston, 1984; Brewster and Soderstrom, 1994; de Jong *et al.* 1999). Untrained line managers may avoid a coaching role due to their

discomfort with it (de Jong et al., 1999). Further, where managers do not reflect a belief in HRD in their operational role the impact of HRD is likely to be reduced (de Jong, 1999), the direct converse of reflecting a belief in HRD being an enabler of HRD, as pointed out earlier.

## Research Questions and Methodology

The research questions that underpin this paper are:

1. Do line managers feel commitment to HR activities?
2. What are the key mechanisms that help support line managers with their HR responsibilities?
3. What barriers are present that hinder managers involvement in HR activities?

In order to explore the research questions, a deductive approach was taken in developing the questionnaire, with the content being informed by a literature review and semi-structured interviews with the UK HR Vice-president. The questionnaire was designed to include Hilton-specific questions as a form of action research and theory-derived questions. The questionnaire format encompassed nominal, ordinal, ranking and Likert rating scales, and several open-ended questions. It was piloted in early 2003, on consultation with a regional HR director, a hotel HR manager and an external survey organisation. The population comprises some 760 managers in Hilton hotels throughout the UK: 10 questionnaires were distributed to each hotel for self-selected and anonymous completion in summer 2003. The response rate is 328 questionnaires, 43%. Descriptive statistics are used to analyse the quantitative results. Open-ended question responses have been coded into themes to enable these to be presented using percentage response rates. Quantitative responses are supplemented with qualitative statements where appropriate. The findings are discussed below in terms of line managers' understanding and views on Esprit, and line managers' perceived role in relation to HR, including enablers and inhibitors influencing their effectiveness in delivering HR activities. Reference is made to the UK HR VP's views on key current issues concerning the Esprit tool in order to frame the Hilton perspective on line managers' issues in HR.

## Results and Findings

### *Respondent Profiles*

All 76 hotels are represented in the sample, with 34% of respondents located in Central & North England, 22% from Scotland and Ireland, 29% South of England and 16% in London. The majority of the respondents are female (56%). Unusually, females form the majority of all levels of managers represented in the sample. Thirty percent of the sample comprises senior managers, consisting of general managers and deputy managers, 53% are departmental managers, 9% supervisors and 7% other. Included in other category are assistant managers and deputy departmental managers. Two percent of the respondents did not indicate their position in the organisation. The age profile of the respondents indicates that 52% of the sample is between 26-45 years of age, with 18% in the 18- 25 years category and 6% over 45 years of age. Fifty six percent of the respondents have been in their current position for 1-5years, 15% over 5years and 27 % less than one year. Of those who have been in their current position for less than one year, 39% have been with the organisation for less than one year, representing 10% of the total returns. Forty eight percent of the respondents indicated that they had been with Hilton hotels for 1-5years and a further 38% over 5 years.

### *Esprit: Line Managers' Role and Issues*

Prior to examining line managers' views on their human resource role, it is important to ascertain whether their views on Esprit align with the corporate intention. It is evident, from the questionnaire results, that the managers in this sample do not universally share the corporate understanding of Esprit. The majority of line managers (87%) perceive Esprit as a club for employees. This majority view is represented across all levels of management, and is not dependent on length of service, age or gender. Only 26% of the respondents indicate that Esprit is a concept directing the way employees work, with a further 14% indicating that it is a way of working practices. Ten percent of the respondents indicate that it is both a club and a concept, with a further 8% viewing it as a concept directing the way employees work, a club for employees and a way of working practices. Other views expressed, by 7% of the respondents, focused on Esprit being a reward / benefit package and an incentive or motivational scheme. For example Esprit is 'an incentive for employees to achieve a company standard resulting in membership of Esprit'. Only four respondents indicated understanding of the beliefs and values underpinning Esprit, as expressed in these responses 'a belief/ culture system' and 'positive enforcement of Hilton as a group in the minds of our employees'.

There also appears to be discrepancies regarding ownership of Esprit. The general view expressed is that there is multiple-ownership. Nearly all respondents provided three responses each, generating a total of 865 responses evidence this. However in analysing these based on number of respondents it can be seen that 69% of managers consider Esprit to be owned by Hilton, whilst 54% indicated that it is owned by employees. Almost two thirds of the respondents consider it to be owned by Human Resources (30% Head office HR and 31%

Hotel based human resources). Twenty three percent perceive it to be owned by senior management, whilst 30% expressed the view that it is owned by departmental managers and 22% owned by the individual hotels. Of the 4% who chose other response, all of them expressed the view that everyone in the organisation owns Esprit, reflecting the corporate view of ownership.

#### *Line Managers' Role in HR*

In order to obtain an overview of the range of HR activities undertaken by line managers, they were asked to indicate the human resource activities in which they were actively involved, the perceived level of importance in relation to importance to business effectiveness and then to rank the top 5 of these. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the results.

Table 1. *Human Resource Activity, Level of Importance and Ranking*

Human Resource Activity	Percentage of managers actively involved	(1=most important; 5=least important) mean score	Ranking of importance to business effectiveness
Selection of employees	85%	2.24	3
Motivation & morale of employees	91%	2.36	1
Induction of new employees	66%	2.58	8
Team briefings & communication	89%	2.77	2
Employee budgeting & forecasting	58%	2.81	11
Health & Safety	86%	3.00	5
Performance appraisal	84%	3.21	4
Identification of training needs	85%	3.26	6
Esprit membership	75%	3.27	12
Ensuring employees are available to participate in training & development activities	80%	3.32	9=
Retention	65%	3.32	9=
Rewards & benefits	70%	3.35	7
Disciplinary & grievance procedures	75%	3.39	15
Evaluating training	71%	3.57	13
Ensuring HR processes are maintained	67%	3.63	14
Other (please specify.) All of the above are important, Social events, salary reviews	3%		

Twenty nine percent of the respondents took the opportunity to provide additional comments on their role in relation to HR activities. Thirty eight percent of the comments relate to training, encompassing analysing training needs, encouraging employees to participate in training, delivery and evaluation. Communications was mentioned by 14% of the respondents predominantly with HR specialists, communicating HR issues to staff and attending HR meetings. Other activities mentioned by respondents include coaching; sickness interviews, teambuilding and payroll management. Complaints regarding workloads and staffing levels were voiced by 10% of the respondents who answered this question, with 5% complaining about HR support within their hotel and head office. Two managers mentioned lack of autonomy and control over recruitment and selection. In contrast 9% of the managers were extremely positive about their role in HR activities, as indicated by the following quotes from two of the managers ' *I feel I have a better/greater opportunity to be more involved within HR because of the hotels and staff itself. It is fantastic not only to be supported by our own team, but the whole 'hotel team' as well.*' and ' *I get support and encouragement continuously. I run my department as if I was HR- but with the bonus of all the help I need available-works fantastic*' [sic].

#### *Enabling HR Activities*

One of the key influences on line managers' attitude to HR activities is the extent to which they perceive it to be considered important by the organisation. In addition to level of importance given to HR at the hotel level, line managers were asked to assess the importance of HR as a general business activity by rating the level of importance attached to HR by the organisation, with 5 being essential and 1 unimportant. Line managers consider that great importance is attached to training and development by unit managers (M=4.20) and the hotel HR manager's role in supporting you in carrying out HR activities (M=4.13), with less importance being given to head office support (M=3.91) and training & development expenditure compared with capital expenditure (M=3.73). However, 98% of general and deputy managers felt that senior managers and directors at regional and head office put importance on training and development. These results indicate that line managers other than general/ deputy managers consider that HRD is not viewed as being of strategic importance in Hilton (McCracken and Wallace, 2000), but is considered to be important at unit level. The target driven nature of Esprit could influence this view.

In order to gain an understanding of managers' views on the value of HR, they were asked to rate HR aspects, with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor. The highest mean score was found in relation to the working relationship with the HR manager (M=3.91). Senior managers were more inclined than departmental managers to rate this as excellent. Individual contribution to training and development was rated as excellent by 13% of the managers, 47% indicated that this was very good and 31% that it was good (M=3.65). Twenty five percent of the respondents rated the HR function in the hotel as excellent, 35% very good, 21% good, with 6% indicating this was poor (M=3.63). The scope and benefits available through Esprit were considered to be excellent by 15% of the managers, with only 4 % rating these as poor (M=3.45). Seventy four percent rated the managerial team effectiveness as very good or good, with only 10% rating this as excellent and 2 % as poor (M=3.41). Almost three quarters (74%) of the respondents indicated that senior managements understanding of training and development issues was good/very good, a further 11% considered this to be excellent with 3% rating this as poor (M= 3.40).

The literature highlighted concerns around line managers' relationship with HR, managers lack of willingness to undertake training and development and perceived senior managers perceptions of HR. The results in this survey indicate that none of these issues are of concern to line managers. However it is interesting to note that tactical/ personal activities were rated higher than team and holistic aspects.

In relation to organisational support for line managers identified by Heraty and Morley (1995) and McGovern *et al* (1997) as facilitating the devolvement of HR, the most popular responses were personal development (61% of respondents) and the provision of appropriate support material (61%). The maintenance of the profile of Esprit, through conferences and newsletter was considered to have been helpful by 45% of the respondents. Senior management support was considered to have assisted line managers by 42% of the managers. Techniques and ideas, for example, best practice was cited by 35% of the managers and administrative support by 31% of the respondents. This analysis reveals that there is strong evidence of support in the form of training and development and supporting materials, however less evident throughout the organisation is senior management support, seen as being a facilitator by Heraty and Morley (1995).

In an attempt to gauge line managers commitment and involvement in HR, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements on values surrounding HR, (5 being strongly agree and 1 strongly disagree). Table 2 provides a breakdown of the mean scores for each of these statements.

Table 2. *Views on Value Statements*

	Mean scores
I feel personal responsibility for my team members.	4.51
I feel that I support the employees in my team.	4.40
I have responsibility for HR in my team.	4.04
Esprit is fundamental to the success of Hilton.	3.86
My employees value Esprit	3.80
Training and development is an explicit part of Hilton moments/ Equilibrium.	3.79
I trust the HR specialists in my unit	3.77
There is a strategic approach to training and development in my unit.	3.67
I value HR activities in the achievement of business objectives in my unit.	3.65
I reflect the values of Esprit in my day-to day role	3.55
My employees value Hilton HR initiatives	3.40
The team atmosphere in my hotel reflects the value of Hilton moments/ Equilibrium.	3.34
Departmental managers work as a team to support Hilton moments/ Equilibrium.	3.27

What is particularly interesting is the strong sense of personal responsibility for staff within teams, with managers indicating that they support and feel a strong sense of responsibility for their employees and HR. This is an area that was highlighted in the interviews with the UK vice-president of HR: '*The challenge is for all managers, supervisors and operations managers to understand that they are responsible for their people, in the same way they also own Esprit.*' However, the lower rating of 'I reflect the values of Esprit in my day-day role' may indicate that managers understand this responsibility but are not able to actually practice this on a daily basis (12% of senior managers and 7% of departmental managers felt that they did not reflect the value of Esprit). This reflects one of the key challenges identified by Hilton. This is likely to impinge on the extent to which they act as a role model, which de Jong *et al* (1999) highlight as an enabler for line managers to undertake HR activities. This may also influence the lower responses given in relation to values and support in teams or across departments for the service initiative of Equilibrium. Although responsibility for HR has the

third highest mean, the perceived value of HR activities in achieving business objectives is less obvious, with 16% of managers strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing. Senior managers rated this higher. The importance of the HR initiative of Esprit is rated higher by supervisors and departmental managers than hotel managers. The level of trust in HR is apparent across all levels of line managers, although 12% of the departmental managers indicated that there is a lack of trust in HR. Garavan *et al* (1993). Identify this as an important enabler. In relation to a strategic approach to training and development, which McCracken and Wallace (2000) contend will influence line managers' commitment and involvement, 62% of senior managers 64% of departmental managers, 54% of supervisors, and 61% of others agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Although there is evidence that support mechanisms for line managers to undertake HRD and HRM roles, are in place in Hilton, it is important to discuss the views of line managers regarding the extent to which barriers are present and their impact on undertaking HR activities.

#### *Barriers to HR Activities*

Table 3. *Barriers to Support HR Activities*

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Never</b>
Heavy workloads	17%	69%	14%
Short term job pressures	8%	70%	22%
Role conflict in acting as both an assessor and coach	4%	25%	71%
Discomfort with coaching role	1%	7%	92%
Lack of skills to support learning	1%	13%	86%
Lack of skills in:			
a) time management	2%	39%	60%
b) communication	1%	16%	83%
c) delegation	1%	26%	72%
d) other (please specify) These included time; understanding the message; pressure to enrol members within 3 months; non-availability of incentives; lack of support from HR and the recruitment cycle.	4%	13%	83%

As can be seen from Table 3 the two main barriers to supporting the HR initiative of Esprit are heavy workloads and short-term job pressures. Heavy workloads are seen as a barrier particularly by departmental managers (89%) and supervisors (90%), whilst general/ deputy managers and supervisors perceive short-term job pressures as barriers. This has been identified in the literature as being a key barrier to devolving HR activities to line managers, by Tsui (1987). Role conflict is identified as being a barrier often or always by 29% of the sample. Discomfort with a coaching role is seen as a barrier by less than 10% of the sample. The importance of training of line managers to enable them to undertake HR activities has been highlighted by a number of authors including Aston (1984), Brewster and Soderstrom (1994) and de Jong *et al*, (1999). Lack of skills to support learning was not seen as a particularly strong barrier with only 14% of the sample highlighting this as an inhibitor, although 32% of supervisors cited this as a barrier. Of the other skills shortages seen as barriers, time management was seen as a barrier, which supports the issues of heavy workloads and short-time pressures. Although lack of delegation and communication skills, were not seen as barriers by the majority of respondents, a perceived lack delegation ability was reported by 39% of the supervisors and 21% of the departmental managers.

These results concur with further views on training that were explored in the questionnaire. The majority of respondents felt that training would help them to some extent (36%) and to a great extent (38%). A mean score of 3.47 was reported for the total sample, although managers aged between 18-25 years, those in supervisory positions, males and those who have been with the organisation for less than one year, all rated this higher than the average score. In contrast the level of confidence to support training and development is seen to be high across all the managers with 38% indicating that they feel very competent and 57% competent. The mean score for the sample on a 5-point Likert scale is 4.31. Senior managers have the highest mean score at 4.46, whilst supervisors the lowest at 4.18. Male managers are slightly more confident in their ability to support training and development than female managers and managers aged between 26-35 years of age had the highest mean rating of 4.30 when analysed on the basis. More confidence in their ability to support training and development is portrayed by managers who have been in their current position for more than one, but less than ten years.

#### *Additional Support*

Suggestions from line managers for additional support in their HR role, generated from 65% of the respondents, has been classified into five themes of training (36%), communications (21%), incentives (21%), efficiency (17%), and roles (10%). Concerns surrounding the amount of time available for training and the pressures to complete training within time periods are prominent. For example 'Set aside time to complete Esprit. It is hard to train staff whilst working in the department as well.' Suggestions concerning training

resources include updating materials and videos, making training fun, holding workshops and providing shorter training guides, as well as providing a dedicated training room and training scripts. Specific management training surrounding equilibrium and other HR activities are also forwarded as suggestions. Improvements to communication relate to more and pertinent information to Esprit members; suggestions include monthly newsletter, posters and Internet email communications.

Within the theme of roles, concerns are expressed regarding the target driven nature of Esprit (*'reduce target pressure and workloads of management so they can live Esprit and pass on to others without compulsory compliance'*). The lack of understanding regarding the philosophy of Esprit is emphasised by the following quotes: *'Each manager you speak to has a different idea of what Esprit is about. Only knowledge=staff benefit[sic]'* and *'Emphasise more that it is about how we treat our guests'*. The two themes of efficiency (17%) and incentives (21%) relate to improvements in the incentive and membership packages. The main concerns emerging with regard to incentives relate to the breadth, range and availability of incentives. Suggestions include reviewing and enhancing the range of incentives. In addition to these themes, 6% of the managers expressed complete satisfaction with current levels of support to carry out HR activities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The above analysis has revealed some issues that warrant further commentary. Most importantly, although HR activities are generally seen to be aligned to the business objective of improving customer service, there appears to be a particular need to align managers understanding of the philosophy/ concept of Esprit. That there appears to be a lack of shared understanding on the concept of Esprit is a signal finding of the primary research. For Hilton, a number of learning points emerge from the questionnaires, as noted below.

It appears that the rewards/ incentive aspects of Esprit are taking a higher priority than the philosophical underpinning of the initiative, which is intended by Hilton to be the driving force of the initiative. The target driven nature of Esprit, where a component of business performance evaluations measure Esprit membership numbers at each hotel, further fuels this.

In addition, the lack of ownership of Esprit by line managers that is evident from this survey, probably linked to lack of understanding, could be acting as an inhibitor to HR activities being seen as a fundamental component of their role. Although there is evidence that line managers do see HR as their responsibility, Esprit values are not being seen across departments within hotels.

The questionnaire responses provide evidence that line managers accept and understand their HR role, but the lack of a shared understanding of the conceptual base of Esprit is resulting in a misdirection of activities.

There are some extremely positive support mechanisms in place to support line managers' involvement in and commitment to HR, evidenced by the training and support, level of trust in HR and the perceived line manager responsibility for HR activities. However, time and short-term work pressures are hindering line managers' ability to undertake HR activities.

Line managers are willing to propose many suggestions to improve HR activities across a range of themes, representing a distinct opportunity for Hilton.

Although this research is focused on one organisation, learning points for other organisations can be highlighted from this case study. In developing the service quality initiative, Hilton has seen this as an integrated concept and has emphasised the importance of HR support to improve service quality. Managerial commitment to Esprit has been gained through ensuring that membership numbers are measured as part of business performance. This has helped focus line management attention on HR as a central business activity. Employee involvement in Esprit has been driven by incentives and rewards. This has resulted in Esprit membership numbers being above target across the organisation. However, the extent to which line managers and employees have embraced the philosophical values of Esprit is evidently questionable. The evidence from this survey suggests that there now needs to be attention given to the meaning of Esprit, with a realignment of the focus to ensure that there is a shared conceptual understanding of Esprit. The indications are that line managers would be receptive to this attention as the survey reveals a positive attitude to HR activities and support for Esprit.

## Contribution to HRD

This paper makes a contribution to HRD in two distinct areas. Firstly, there is a lack of empirical work addressing understanding of issues around devolvement of HRM & HRD activities to line managers. This paper enhances understanding, by providing line managers' views on enablers and inhibitors in this case organisation. A further contribution to HRD can be found in relation to identification of the difficulty of balancing business driven involvement with philosophical commitment to HRM and HRD activities.

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