

Special edition editorial

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Special Edition Editorial

Guest Editors: Prof Sarah Fidment, Dr Christine O’Leary & Dr Paul Stokes

Introduction

In June 2022, Sheffield Hallam University was delighted to host the first online University Forum for Human Resource Development International Conference– its first conference in 3 years.

The conference theme ‘Bridging Theory and Practice in a post covid era’ was incredibly timely given the major changes that had occurred, during, and post, pandemic, in how and where we work. Change in the workplace has never been so topical.



The conference call resulted in 91 research presentations and papers being presented across 11 streams: Leadership and Management; Coaching and Mentoring; Critical Approaches to HR; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Learning in SMEs; Workplace learning; Training and Development, Global and comparative approaches to HRD, Employee engagement; Strategic capabilities and the changing nature of work; Practitioner research; teaching and learning; Employability and career development.

The research presented the data and catalysts for change based on live research undertaken during the pandemic within organisational contexts and settings of all shapes and sizes and from parts of the globe that are still grappling with the geo-political platforms in which they operate.

Following an extensive analysis, a small number of these presenters and authors were invited to submit full versions of their papers for inclusion in this

special edition and five of these were successful and make up this special of the Journal.

The Articles

The articles included here come from a broad range of different perspectives and paradigms in HRD. For instance, Cox (2023) locates himself in the strategic capabilities stream and speaks to the importance of incorporating sensing, seizing and reconfiguration capabilities when using the dynamic capabilities construct when negotiating organisational transition. In particular, he calls for organisational culture, organisational learning and organisational leadership to be recognised and included as essential pre-requisites to that framework.

The importance of having organizational competences for transition is also explored by Dibra and Gerdoci (2023). Using a multi-level evaluation approach, they develop a new index which seeks to include training needs assessment, training programme design, training methods, training evaluation and training organizational climate. They characterise this as a configuration approach, which conceptualises the organization as a multi-level, open system which influences and is influenced by context. They conclude that managers and training officers can use their index as a self-assessment process for identifying areas for improvement in their training functions and policies.

Wen’s (2023), similarly, picks up this theme of organisational learning but views it through a knowledge sharing lens, applied in a small family business context. Using a qualitative case study approach, she explores how a small family business employs strategies of knowledge sharing, but, also, knowledge-hiding in relation to how HRD is enacted. She conducted interviews with 22 key employees in the case study organization and uses this data to identify theoretical and practical implications for HRD in this particular context.

By contrast, Greer (2023) takes up a radically different focus in relation to HRD. She re-examines research in HRD from a feminist perspective and calls for a ‘reboot’ of feminist research in HRD, that is more inclusive. Taking a critical feminist lens, she argues that feminist HRD researchers need to be more

resistant to binary thinking, essentialism, heterosexism, and cisnormativity in HRD, and more focused on work that is more located in a multi-dimensional, intersectional gender diversity framework.

Cavanagh-Cole's (2023) article, focused on promoting the use of somatics in coaching, is similar to that of Greer (2023) in that her work seeks to question the dominant discourse within her field of practice. Cavanagh-Cole (2023) argues that, in the field of coaching, somatic practice coaching is under-explored. As with Wen's (2023) article, Cavanagh-Cole (2023) used a qualitative interview based approach and generated five key themes: labelling & language; somatic content; role of the coach & expertise; contexts for somatic coaching; blended or specialist approach. She concludes by calling for more research that includes the fields of movement and anatomical studies (currently being examined within neuroscience) and its potential to enhance coaching models, content and training.

Key Themes

The five articles we have included in this special edition seem to represent the wide scope of contemporary HRD research. Whilst each article addresses quite different contexts and issues within HRD, there do seem to be three connecting themes and points of similarity:

All five articles are constructively critical about the current state of research in their respective fields. Hence, each have an emancipatory agenda in terms of freeing up those who might use their conclusions (managers, researchers, trainers) to improve things in their respective areas of application.

All of the authors seek to build on existing literature and studies to propose new directions and perspectives. This is achieved by pointing out possible 'blind spots' or missing ingredients in existing typologies and frameworks (i.e. Cox (2023), Dibra and Gerdoci (2023) and Greer (2023)) or by more exploratory work which attempts to add a different concepts and perspectives by inducting theory from qualitative empirical data (i.e. Cavanagh-Cole (2023) and Wen (2023)

All authors were clear-sighted about the barriers and challenges in adopting proposed new directions and suggested clear directions of travel in order to overcome these.

Summary

In summary, the June 2022 conference represented a good opportunity to re-evaluate the relationship between HRD theory and practice in the post-pandemic context. The five articles featured in this special edition seemed to us to represent some of the richness and quality of that debate in terms of the breadth and depth of the work involved. Our intention, in producing this special edition, was to give those who were not able to engage with last year's conference an opportunity to sample some of that richness.

Our hope is that the work of these authors will inspire readers to take greater strides in their own work and thinking because of it. Therefore, we commend these articles to you and hope that you gain as much as we did from reading them and thinking about their implications for HRD thinking and practice.

About the guest editors

Prof Sarah Fidment



Prof Sarah Fidment is Professor of Leadership and Management and the Head of Department for People and Performance at the Manchester Metropolitan Business School, which is a triple accredited business school, placing it among the very best business schools in the world. Sarah is a transformational leader with vision, passion, and proven ability in increasing impact of management and leadership excellence. She is an expert on leadership development having designed, developed, and delivered over 50+ leadership development interventions for national and international audiences. Examples include the

Small Business Leadership Programme, The Help to Grow Management programme and bespoke programmes for SIG Plc, the Co-operative Group, Nestle, Morrisons, Dixons Carphone and the Sheffield City Region.

Sarah's influence has extended to government policy development as a peer reviewer and published author on behalf of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, enhancing the external reputation of HE and HRD practice, 2019, is a board member of the International Journal for HRD: Practice Policy and Research and was awarded Professorship in 2021 in recognition for her outstanding contribution to leadership and management professional practice. Prior to academia Sarah held Senior Executive positions in SME's in the Sheffield City Region.

Sarah's research interests include embodiment of leadership, strategic HRM, equality and diversity issues and how to create high performing organisations in small and medium sized enterprises, having led several projects in this area. Sarah was the Conference Chair of the 2022 UFHRD Annual Conference.

Dr Christine O'Leary

Dr Christine O'Leary is a Principal Lecturer in the Sheffield Business School at Sheffield Hallam University where she has held a number of leadership and management roles including programme leadership, Associate Director for the Centre for Excellence in Promoting Learner Autonomy (CPLA), Director of Sheffield Business School's Centre for Pedagogic Research and Innovation (CPRI), Sheffield Business School Assessment Lead and Subject Group Leader for the Languages and Cultures Subject Area. Christine is currently leading on a project relating to developing the assessment literacy of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Christine also co- leads the University's Hallam Guild Assessment for Applied learning Forum and leads its Advance HE Principal/ Senior Fellow Network.



As a Principal Fellow of Advance HE, Christine is committed to leading and supporting the development of colleagues in Learning and teaching and pedagogic scholarship/ research both within and outside the University through leadership roles in professional subject associations and international research networks.

Christine is an active researcher, practitioner, and contributor to local, national and international research networks relating to the development of learner/ teacher autonomy within formal educational contexts and assessment and has presented papers at both national and international conferences, and published articles in refereed publications in these areas since the mid 1990s.



Dr Paul Stokes

Dr Paul Stokes is Associate Professor of Coaching & Mentoring at the Sheffield Business School at Sheffield Hallam University. Paul is a Master Practitioner with the European Mentoring & Coaching Council and for the last 25 years, he has worked with many different organisations and their leadership teams on the development of their staff using a range of group and team-based interventions including action learning, open space methodologies and appreciative inquiry. Paul is an experienced researcher and, using action research methodologies, has developed impactful interventions within

organisations on creating coaching cultures, organisational learning and organisational design.

As a coach and mentor Paul has worked with a range of individual coachees and mentees, as well as teams, from the public, private and third sectors and with first line managers up to senior executives. As a teacher and people developer, Paul was instrumental in setting up one of the first Masters courses in Coaching & Mentoring in 2002. Paul has worked on numerous leadership development programmes with clients such as Diageo, BP, Health Education England, Norgren, Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Police, Barnsley Hospital, Sheffield University and Robert McBride Ltd. He is also an experienced supervisor of coaches and mentors, with both individual and team supervisees. Paul has co-written two best selling books on coaching & mentoring: *Mentoring in Action* (Kogan Page) and *Coaching & Mentoring Theory & Practice* (Sage) as well as several book chapters and journal articles.