THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Investigating the Concept, Practice and Strategy of Human Resource Development in Saudi Public Organisations

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By

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This thesis explores how HRD is conducted in the under-researched context of the Arab Middle East, specifically in Saudi Arabian public organisations. Four research questions are addressed: how HRD is conceptualized by practitioners; what systems, processes and approaches are currently prevalent in these organisations, to what extent the HRD function in these organisations is strategic and what are the main challenges facing HRD now and in the future in Saudi public organisations. A mixed – methods approach was adopted, grounded on a pragmatic rationale. Quantitative data were collected from a questionnaire survey of HRD managers in all 158 public organisations; 115 usable responses were returned. Issues emerging from the survey were then explored in depth via semi – structured interviews with a non- random sample of 23 managers. Findings revealed a conceptualization of HRD similar that in the West, reflecting notions of human capital, whole – person development, improved productivity and keeping pace with environmental change. However, participants were caught in competing dynamics of tradition versus modernization and centralizations versus decentralization, which undermined their efforts and left them frustrated. With regard to the strategic role of HRD, again, reality did not match the rhetoric. HRD was often relegated to an administrative role and practitioners excluded from decision-making. Long-term benefits were commonly sacrificed to short – term cost concerns. It is concluded that the main challenges facing HRD now and in the future in Saudi Arabia are the need for practitioners to be creative and proactive in asserting their influence and developing the professional status of HRD; the struggle to balance competing cultural assumptions and to develop a culturally appropriate model of HRD; and the need for greater clarity in the
governmental HRD strategy by which the public organisations’ HRD efforts are both encouraged and constrained.
Dedication

In memory of

my Mum and Dad, who died before I started this journey.

Thanks for all your love, care and sacrifices for us.

Your memory is always with me and encourages me throughout this life.

May Allah have mercy on you and place your souls among those of the believers.

Also

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Huda Alsaeed, who supports me and helps me to overcome obstacles and to live my dreams, and my children, Hisham, Ghaida, Raghda and Judy, for their love, conversation and patience amidst all hardships.
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<tr>
<td>ARAMCO</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian Oil Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTD</td>
<td>American Society for Training &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMOL</td>
<td>Centre for Management and Organisational Leaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>HCAR</td>
<td>Higher Committee for Administrative Reform</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Institute of Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD</td>
<td>Organisational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>SABIC</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia Basic Industries Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHRD</td>
<td>Strategic Human Resource Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>T&amp;D</td>
<td>Training and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>Training Needs Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore how human resource development (HRD) is conceived and practised in Saudi Arabian public organisations. Its contribution is to highlight the complexity of the concept, practice and strategy of HRD in such organisations. Businesses and organisations today face significant change due both to the effects of globalisation and to advances in technology. Saudi Arabia is one of those countries whose government has recognized that in the twenty-first century, the ability to operate and compete successfully in the global market place will largely depend on the availability and quality of human resources (Rothwell and Kolb, 1999).

It is widely acknowledged that human resource development has been and will continue to be a significant factor in the socioeconomic development of a country. Governments, organisations, and individuals invest in the development of human resources in return for higher benefits in the long run. Individuals engage in HRD programmes with the expectation that doing so will help them in career development (Armstrong, 2009; Erasmus et al., 2010). Although governments have broader aims such as gaining long-term socio-economic benefits through alleviating unemployment, organisations are mainly interested in how HRD can benefit them in terms of raised productivity (Stredwick, 2000). Therefore, apart from looking at the macro perspective, it is necessary to look at HRD from the micro perspective, i.e., from the organisational level.

Recently organisations have paid increasing attention to HRD activities aimed at the creation of an effective workforce. These activities focus on providing people with the
requisite new skills, knowledge, working practices and strategies necessary for their current and future responsibilities. Through training and skills provision for present and future needs HRD could play a major role in increasing productivity and maintaining competitiveness (Armstrong, 2009; Tseng and McLean, 2008).

Saudi rhetoric espouses the view that HRD plays a central role in meeting national and organisational strategic aims. However, relatively little is known about how this Western-born concept is understood and enacted in the Arab world, and especially in the public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia. This research contributes to fill this gap. This chapter presents an overview of the study by highlighting the rationale for the research and its guiding principles and objectives. It also introduces the Saudi context and outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Statement of Problem

There is a need for HRD in developing countries in general but more specifically in the Middle East region where the need has become urgent. Indeed, observers believe that the need for human resources development presents the Middle East region with one of its most critical challenges.

In Saudi Arabia the problem is particularly acute. It is one of the Middle Eastern countries experiencing a shortfall in qualified human resources in general and the need for developing its human resources is particularly pressing at a time when the Saudi government is attempting to control the inflow of foreign skilled labour into the country (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a). The small number of skilled and trained national workers in Saudi gives little choice to organisations but to depend heavily on the influx of skilled foreign labour (Alzalabani, 2002).
One factor contributing to this situation is Arab organisations’ relative failure to recognize HRD as a strategic management function which adds to the effectiveness of the organisation (Afiouni, 2007; Altarawneh, 2005; Al-Athari and Zairi, 2002; Agnaia, 1996; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995). Rather, as a result of certain cultural reasons, it tends to be given as a reward to selected people in the organisation and as such it takes no account of actual need (Agnaia, 1996; Altarawneh, 2005). In order for the Saudi government to succeed with their strategy for implementing privatisation and nationalisation policies HRD needs to be applied on a systematic basis. Despite the fact that there is increasing debate and interest in HRD and the fact that Saudi has invested heavily in trying to spread the practice, this has proved insufficient (Achoui, 2009). One reason for this might be the prevalence of shortcomings common in many countries. For example, a study carried out by Abdalla et al. (1998) found that although Arab countries do implement certain aspects of modern HRD, there are still deficiencies in terms of training needs assessment (TNA) and training evaluation.

Concerning TNA by performance reports or based on the views of managers, Agnaia (1996) and Altarawneh (2005) found that TNA carried out by these means does not always reflect the developmental needs of employees, because procedures may be unclear or may be subject to family, tribalism and friendship ties. They go on to say that western HRD managerial practices, programmes and techniques have been used and applied in these organisations without any consideration of the context of the socio-cultural environment of these organisations. Therefore, the application of these practices does not always work, resulting in the waste of time and resources. There is a need for a clearer understanding of how HRD operates in the Saudi context and how it can be developed to play its intended role in organisational development.
1.3 Rationale for the Research

This study is located within the wider research and debate concerning changes in the business and work environment during the last twenty years. These changes are due to the spread of globalisation and the impact of new technology coupled with the demand for a workforce equipped with up to date knowledge and competencies (Debrah & Smith, 2000; Schmidt & Lines, 2002; Rothwell & Kolb, 1999). This enforced pace of change has forced organisations to acknowledge that their main source of competitive advantage in a global economy lies in the quality of their human resources. Consequently there is a vital need to provide workers with the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies (Harrison, 1997; Gardiner et al., 2001; Armstrong, 2009; Harrison & Kessels, 2004).

Organisations are increasingly coming to recognize that their human resources are an important asset in terms of enhancing business strategies. HRD is viewed as a strategy for improving the performance of an organisation. One relatively new trend is the field of Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD). This approach looks at the ways in which HRD can be used strategically in order to influence or improve organisational performance. Strategic HRD works by linking HRD plans and strategies to the overall business strategies. As an emerging new academic discipline SHRD is currently under-researched. Therefore it offers the potential for more studies (Garavan et al., 1995; McCracken and Wallace, 2000; McCarthy et al., 2003; Lee, 1996; Tseng and McLean, 2008).

As a result of the significant importance of HRD to business success, research in HRD has been evolving over the last two decades and it has attracted scholars and researchers
around the world (see for example, Garavan et al., 1999; Garavan, 1991; Lee, 2003, Harrison & kessels, 2004; Stewart & Beaver, 2004; Armstrong, 2009).

This study focuses on Saudi Arabia and particularly the public sector, for several reasons. First, there is a lack of empirical studies of HRD in Saudi Arabia, particularly in identifying the concept and practices of HRD. Secondly, the task of developing human resources in Saudi Arabia has been a key focus of the government in the country’s national development plans. Much of the government’s emphasis in HRD is targeted at the public sector organisations. This is because the development of human resources in this sector is recognised as crucial for preparing a capable and skilled workforce with the expertise, technological skills and critical thinking abilities to meet current and future challenges. Moreover, the government, in supporting human resources’ training, education and development, continuously invests heavily in education and training. This is because for decades HRD has been regarded as a key strategy for Saudi’s economic development, as indicated in the Ninth National Development Plan (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a).

The Saudi government believes that investment in human capital is the key to success of the country's economic growth (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a). Therefore, the government’s initiatives and support towards HRD and its potentially important contribution to economic growth and strategic development require an exploration and examination of HRD in the public sector in Saudi Arabia, in order to evaluate whether such investment is appropriately targeted and employed as intended. Furthermore, there is a need to conceptualise HRD in Saudi Arabia, as an Arab country, because there is as yet limited evidence as to how this Western-originated concept is applied in the
distinctive Arab cultural context. Hence, this study will contribute to a context-specific understanding of the nature and extent of HRD and its associated concepts.

A particular impetus for this study has been the observations and insights gained by the researcher during the course of his career in HRD. He has spent more than twenty years working in the field of HRD in Saudi public organisations, as senior trainer and consultant in the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Also, he has designed and conducted many training programmes in the area of public management. At organisation level, the researcher worked as internal and external consultant in the HRD department in several public organisations. His experience also extends to national level, as he headed a team from different public organisations to restructure the foreign affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These experiences have given the researcher insight into prevailing issues and concerns related to HRD in the Saudi context, from multiple perspectives.

1.4 Objectives of Study

In view of the potential importance of HRD, not only to the private and public sector organisations, but also to Saudi Arabia as a whole, this study attempts to explore and analyse the concept of HRD and current HRD practices and to evaluate its strategic position and role in helping Saudi public organisations to improve their performance. Therefore, this research has pursued the following set of objectives:

\[\text{1. The IPA was established in 1961 as an independent governmental agency. It is the central authority for training, development and consultations for governmental organisations.}\]
1. To explore how HRD is conceptualized by HRD practitioners in the Saudi public sector.

2. To explore and investigate the HRD systems, processes and approaches currently used in Saudi public organisations.

3. To explore the strategic positioning of the HRD function in Saudi organisations.

4. To identify the main problems, concerns and challenges that may face HRD functions in the Saudi public sector organisations, now and in the future.

1.5 Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do HRD practitioners in the Saudi public sector conceptualize HRD?

2. What HRD systems, processes and approaches are currently prevalent in the Saudi public sector organisations?

3. To what extent is the HRD function in the Saudi public sector organisations strategic?

4. How do HRD practitioners view the main problems and challenges facing HRD now and for the future in Saudi public organisations?

1.6 The Significance of the Study

The importance of this study comes from the increasing interest in HRD in the world in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular. A review of the relevant literature on HRD and SHRD in the Arab organisations shows a real need for this study because there is a serious gap in the literature on HRD in the developing countries in general and in the
Arab countries in particular (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Alzalabani, 2002; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006). Common (2008, p.176) for example, commented on the “large gap in the literature regarding the Gulf States”. In this respect, Weir (2003) argues that HR is normally seen from a Western perspective and there is a largely ignored paradigm of the Arab Middle East which he called the “fourth paradigm” (p.69). Similarly, Hutchings and Weir (2006) assert that the Arab world is “hitherto under-researched” (p.272).

Therefore, the main significance of this study lies in its being the first empirical study to investigate HRD concepts and practices in the Arab context, specifically Saudi organisations, particularly in the public sector. This sector has been targeted because of the particular emphasis that the government has placed on HRD in the public sector. The shortage of studies of HRD in Saudi public sector organisations affords an opportunity for this study to make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge in several ways. Firstly, it will contribute to some insight into how far western-derived theory is applicable in a different cultural context. Secondly, it will contribute in broadening understanding of the nature of HRD by exploring systematically how Saudi practitioners conceptualize the idea of HRD and how HRD has been practised in public organisations in Saudi Arabia. These contributions will clarify the meaning and improve the understanding of HRD in the public sector in Saudi Arabia and in the context of an Arab country. Thus, this empirical and analytical study will expand the limited literature. Thirdly, this study hopes to raise awareness of the importance of HRD, and give a better understanding of how HRD can be approached effectively.

The study will also have important practical implications. Arab countries have recently given more attention to HRD in order to develop their workers. In Saudi Arabia, HRD
has been a subject of increasing interest and debate in recent years because the country is moving toward privatisation, globalisation and direct foreign investment (Achoui, 2009). This has required more attention to management practices in general and to HRD in particular. The government has always supported HRD generously. For example, SR 45,600 million was dedicated for this purpose in 1998 and increased to SR 54,300 million in 2002 (Alzalabani, 2002). In the 2010 budget, more than SR 137.6 billion (about 23 billion pounds) was allocated to education and personnel training (Ministry of Finance, 2009). This study will help policy makers at government and organisation levels to maximize the benefit from this investment by providing a basis for improving strategies for HRD.

1.7 Research Methodology

In order to accomplish the research objectives, both primary and secondary data have been used. The primary data provide extensive, deep insights into the problem in a real-world context, whereas the secondary data provide theoretical and empirical information on HRD in a global context. A predominantly qualitative approach was adopted. Twenty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to all personnel responsible for HRD in the public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was designed after reviewing literature on the theoretical framework of HRD, definitions of HRD, practice, issues and challenges in HRD and HRD practices in developing countries. Questionnaires were analysed and interpreted with the aid of SPSS, while in the qualitative analysis, thematic and interpretive analysis was used. Methodology will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
1.8 Research Context

In view of the importance of context to this study, this section will comprise a short introduction to Saudi Arabia. It will cover the geography of the region, the population, the type of government and the economy.

Saudi Arabia was founded and unified by King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud in 1932. It remains the biggest country in the Arabian Peninsula. In order to establish his country King Abdul Aziz embarked on a campaign to seize control of the Arabian Peninsula. This campaign continued from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. Al-Riyadh, the present day capital of Saudi Arabia was captured by King Abdul Aziz in 1902. By 1932, the King had taken control of most of the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Farsy, 1986).

Amongst the Islamic nations, Saudi Arabia is the most conservative. It occupies a special place in the Islamic world as the home of Mecca. This is the location of the Ka'ba: the most sacred shrine in Islam. All around the globe Muslims turn towards the Ka’ba in prayer, five times a day. The Prophet's Mosque in Medina is the next most revered site of worship for all Muslims. Each year, millions of Muslims visit the Ka'ba in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina to worship, to visit the Prophet's grave, and to see the cities that gave birth to Islam. Pilgrimage to Mecca is mandatory for all Muslims who are capable of undertaking it, whilst that to Medina, though not required, is nevertheless popular. Due to the fact that Saudi Arabia is the heartland of Islam, the birthplace of its history, and the land of the two holiest mosques in Mecca and Medina, Islam is the main guide for the affairs of people and for the policies and functions of government. The Holy Qur'an represents the constitution of the Kingdom and Shari‘ah
(Islamic Law) is the source of Saudi legal system. While remaining rooted in its Islamic origins, the Kingdom is continuously adapting to meet the challenges and demands of the modern world (Al-Farsy, 1986). The growing focus on HRD and the attempts to reconcile it with Islamic values can be seen in the context of this effort.

1.8.1 Geography and Population

Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered in the north by Jordan, Kuwait, and Iraq, in the east by the Arabian Gulf, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, in the south by Yemen and Oman, and in the west by the Red Sea. Saudi falls in the tropical and subtropical desert region. The climate is harsh, dry, and subject to great extremes of temperature.

The total population of Saudi Arabia for the year 2009 was estimated at 25,370,000 including 6,830,000 non Saudi-nationals who work and reside in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi population is growing at an alarming rate, the annual rate of increase being 2.5 per cent for the year 2009; 40.4 per cent of them are aged under 15 years. Life expectancy at birth for the total population in Saudi Arabia is 75.67; it is about 77.78 for females and 73.66 for males. The fertility rate in Saudi Arabia is very high. It is estimated as 3.3 children born/woman (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a). The Ministry of Economy and Planning has projected the Saudi population would reach 29,860,000 by 2024 (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2005b). The growing population and the young structure of the population are expected to have implications for employment, especially the drive to replace expatriate workers with Saudis, and this is likely to increase the importance of HRD, as discussed later.
1.8.2 Public Sector Organisations

Saudi Arabia is a traditional Arab Islamic monarchy. In Saudi Arabia, the king is the head of the state and the prime minister. The Holy Qur'an is claimed to be the country's constitution and the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) is deemed to be the basis for its legal system. The Arabic language is the national language and Riyadh is the capital city. Saudi Arabia is governed by the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad).

The government system in Saudi Arabia includes three main powers: the Council of Ministers, the Consultative Council (Ash-Shura Council), and the Judiciary. The functions performed by the Council of Ministers include conducting the financial, economic, educational, and defence policies as well as conducting and supervising all of the state’s public affairs. The King of Saudi Arabia is the ultimate source of the State’s judicial, executive, and regulatory (legislative) powers (Al-Otaibi, 1995).

In 1992, the Saudi government introduced a major political development to establish the Consultative Council (Majlis Ash-Shura). It advises the king and the Council of Ministers on a regular basis on matters pertaining to government programmes and policies. Its primary function is to suggest, interpret, and modify the laws, bylaws, contracts, and international agreements. In addition, it expresses its opinion on the state and general policy, including the general plan for social and economic development which is presented to it by the President of the Council of Ministers. The council consists of 150 members who are appointed by the king for a four-year renewable term. The King or his representative delivers an annual speech to the council. The speech deals with the country’s internal and foreign policies (Al-Hamad, 1995).
1.8.3 Government Bureaucracy

In addition to the Council of Ministers, the present bureaucratic structure consists of ministries, independent agencies and departments, public enterprises, public universities, and local government. Ministries constitute the backbone of the executive government machinery, as they are the tool for implementing the government’s policies in diverse affairs of life. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the first ministry to be established in 1930. After that a number of ministries were established; the Ministry of Finance and National Economy in 1932, the Ministry of Defence in 1944, the Ministry of the Interior in 1951. In 1954, the Council of Ministers was established and additional new ministries were established. The current Council of Ministers is headed by the king and consists of twenty-two ministers and seven ministers of state.

All of these ministries are governed by uniform laws, bylaws and instructions with respect to their financial and accounting procedures. Also, they work in accordance with the civil service system. The minister is regarded as the final authority and the direct supervisor of the affairs and work of the ministry. The hierarchical structure of most ministries is identical (Al-Otaibi, 1995).

The second group of the public organisations is the independent agencies and departments that are not in the category of ministries or public enterprises. These independent organisations and departments are given various names, such as ‘bureau’, ‘commission’, ‘presidency’, ‘council’, ‘agency’. There are no specific criteria governing which name is used. With regard to the organisational structure and level of such organisations, presidencies and bureaus are headed by a president with the rank of a minister. As for ‘agencies’, they are at a lower organisational level; some are under the umbrella of the different ministries, such as Ministry of Finance and Ministry of
Defence and Aviation. The nature of the work of these independent agencies and departments is diverse. Like ministries, they are administered and governed by the same laws, bylaws, regulations and civil service system and regulations.

The third group of public sector organisations is the the educational and training agencies, including public universities and training and research centres. Two types of authority exist for maintaining these organisations: (a) a board of directors and (b) the chief executive officers of the organisation. These organisations have special regulations related to personnel and financial affairs. They have flexibility in setting up and implementing their own regulations in this regard, which makes them different from the more-traditional governmental organisations (Higan, 1995). King Saud University was established in 1957, as the first university in the Kingdom. The number of universities increased from eight universities in 2005 to more than twenty four universities in 2010 (Ministry of Planning and Economy, 2010a).

The fourth group of public sector organisations is the local government and Miscellaneous Service Agencies. In 1993, the government introduced the Provincial Administrative System as a new attempt to upgrade the level of performance of government departments in various provinces throughout all parts of the country (Almotairi, 1995). The growth of population and the size of government bureaucracy led to a reorganisation of the country into more provinces and governorates. The new provincial system divides the country into 13 governorates, each with its regional capital, as follows:

1. Riyadh Region, Riyadh City
2. Makkah Region, Makkah City
3. Madinah Region, Madinah City
4. Qasim Region, Buraidah City
5. Eastern Region, Dammam City
6. Asir Region, Abha City
7. Tabouk Region, Tabouk City
8. Hail Region, Hail City
9. Northern Border Region, Arar City
10. Jizan Region, Jizan City
11. Najran Region, Najran City
12. Baha Region, Baha City
13. Al-Jouf Region, Sikaka City

The governors of these provinces are all appointed by the central government, headed by the president of the Council of Ministers (the King). In order to increase flexibility in organising and managing provinces, each province is divided into smaller administrative districts, counties, and sub-districts.

Another feature of the new system is the creation of Provincial Councils. The regional council consists of:

(a) The Governor as Chairman

(b) The deputy Governor as Chairman’s deputy

(c) Heads of the region’s official bodies

(d) A team of locals (not less than 10) judged as eligible in terms of learning, experience and specialisation and appointed by order of the President’s Council Ministers (King) upon the Governor’s recommendation and approval of the
Minister of the Interior with a renewable four-year membership term (Almotairi, 1995).

Although the provincial councils are not representative institutions and their members are not elected, some observers agree that their establishment is an unprecedented and promising step in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, on October 2003, the Saudi government approved groundbreaking plans to streamline local and municipal governments by introducing free elections for half of the members of each municipal council to ensure that citizens have a strong voice in local affairs. In November, 2004, the first elections took place in Riyadh region.

Also, for each province, there are city mayorships. They have wide-ranging authority and they supervise and control civic development through their city-planning agencies. They report to the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs. These organisations are governed by the civil service system and regulations. The regions of Saudi are shown in the following figure 1.1.
1.8.4 Economy

Saudi Arabia has the largest oil reserve in the world. It is also the largest oil-exporting country. The Saudi economy is largely dependent on oil, which accounts for roughly 75 per cent of the total Saudi budget revenue, 45 per cent of the GDP, and 90 per cent of export earnings. The Saudi daily average oil production was 8.2 million barrels per day in 2009. The Saudi economy has continued its growth despite the global conditions caused by the global economic crisis that resulted in huge decline in oil prices during 2009 (Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, 2010).

All major economic activities have continued to show progress at varying rates. According to the World Bank, Saudi Arabia has risen from 67th to 13th for ease of doing
business (Saudi Arabian Investment Authority, 2010). The main agricultural products of Saudi Arabia are grain, vegetables, fruits, and poultry.

Unemployment is not officially measured in Saudi Arabia. However, some have estimated the unemployment of males aged 20–29 at between 15–20 percent. Others estimated it at around 26.4 per cent. If the Saudi female population was included this average would rise (Mellahi, 2006). Saudi Arabia acceded to the WTO in 2005 after many years of negotiations.

1.9 The Organisation of the Thesis

Including this introductory chapter, the materials in this thesis are organised into nine chapters to provide systematic coverage. The content is outlined in the following:

**Chapter Two** examines HRD literature, beginning with the early focus on Training and Development (T&D). A detailed discussion is provided of the development of the HRD concept, with a summary of HRD definitions which reflect the viewpoints of scholars. The roles and functions of HRD are explored. Then the concept of Strategic Human Resource Development is introduced and the main characteristics of SHRD are presented.

**Chapter Three** is devoted to the literature regarding HRD in Arab organisations. It explores the main cultural and organisational factors that influence managerial practices, including T&D effectiveness in Arab countries. Also, it explores the experiences of some Arab countries regarding HRD functions. Moreover, it examines the role of HRD in Saudi Arabia under successive development plans.
**Chapter Four** explains the research methodology. A mixed method was adopted, combining interviews and a questionnaire, in order to obtain a broad-based descriptive picture enriched by deep insights based on the perceptions and experiences of those most closely involved. An explanation is provided of how the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were designed and conducted, including sampling issues and quality criteria. Data analysis procedures are explained. Finally, consideration is given to ethical issues and how these were addressed in the research.

**Chapter Five** contains results of the analysis of the data collected using the structured questionnaire. Descriptive analysis of the current HRD practices, profiles of the questionnaire respondents, the structure of HRD departments and the main challenges facing HRD are reported.

**Chapter Six** discusses the analysis of the semi-structured interviews regarding research question one, concerning practitioners’ conceptualization of HRD. Thematic analysis is used to generate themes that emerged regarding the concept of HRD as viewed by the interview participants.

**Chapter Seven** discusses the findings related to research question two regarding the systems, processes and approaches of HRD in Saudi public organisations. The findings are critically discussed in the light of the literature and linked to HRD practices.

**Chapter Eight** discusses the findings related to research question three regarding the strategic position of HRD in Saudi public organisations.

**Chapter Nine** is the concluding chapter. It contains a summary of the main research findings and draws on these to answer research question four. It also presents the study’s theoretical, practical and methodological implications. Limitations of the study
are discussed and suggestions made for future studies, building on the contribution of this research.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: FROM T&D TO STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

Organisations must take into account a number of issues in order to compete effectively: ongoing technological development; lessening trade sanctions; a consequent increase in global economy; and the unpredictability of consumer demand within existing markets (Wang and Niu, 2010). As a result of these challenges organisations are forced to recognise the central role played by their workforce. Organisations need highly competent workers with the optimum level of requisite skills. At its most basic, securing this need is the role of Training and Development (T&D). However, this presents a rather limited perspective. For a variety of reasons, a more recent focus of attention is the value of broader Human Resource Management (HRM) activities, specifically Human Resource Development (Gubbins and Garavan, 2009; Garavan et al., 1995). HRD is credited with being able to create a skilled, qualified and resourceful workforce. It has also helped to create a learning culture that enables organisations to improve both their performance and their responsiveness to change (Kissack and Callahan, 2010).

HRD performs a vitally important role within organisations for numerous reasons. For example, Garavan et al. (1995) have noted that organisations face difficulties when trying to recruit suitably skilled and experienced people. This means that there is an increasing onus on organisations to develop competent, adaptable and skilled workers. Another view is put forward by Acton and Golden (2003) who argue that the continuous progress in technology and knowledge creates a skills gap for workers. It renders their traditional skills obsolete whilst at the same time generating the demand for new skills.
This pace of change makes HRD activities doubly necessary: they are needed for growth at an individual level and also for growth at an organisational level. HRD might also help in motivating employees, and encouraging their retention, so skills and knowledge are not lost to the organisation (Wilson, 2004). As a result, the emphasis is on implementing more powerful and critical HRD programmes in order to meet organisational objectives and goals more effectively and efficiently (Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007).

The literature review in this chapter reflects this gradual expansion and strategising of HRD. It starts by examining the T&D function and its limitations, before considering the theoretical foundation of HRD and providing a definition of the concept. It then goes on to examine the roles and objectives of HRD, including its more recent strategic orientation. It concludes that HRD is multi-faceted, not least because it is borne out of industrial economics and its psychology is Western in orientation.

2.2 Training and Development

Training and development (T&D) plays a positive role in organisations, as a tool for enhancing effectiveness. Organisations and people that invest in training are more successful and remain in touch with the rapidly changing society in which we live today. T&D is concerned with improving and enhancing employees’ skills, abilities and knowledge in order to cope with current and future work effectively.

According to Taylor (1996, p.258), T&D is the “systematic process concerned with facilitating the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes which result in improved organisational performance”. This definition emphases three major points. The first is the systematic process, which should be a planned one, to fulfil some fundamental
organisational requirements based on careful information gathering. The second point is the acquisition of skill, knowledge and attitudes, which indicates that organisational performance involves more than just doing. Finally, it emphasises improved organisational performance rather than improved individual performance.

“Training” and “development” are not necessarily the same or synonymous, although they are sometimes used interchangeably. One of the commonly quoted distinctions of these terms was provided by the Manpower Services Commission’s Glossary of Training Terms (1981, p.43). It defines training as “a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge and skills through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities”. It defines development as “the growth of realisation of a person’s ability, through conscious or unconscious learning. Development programmes usually include elements of a planned study and experience and are frequently supported by a coaching or counselling facility”.

Training and development can provide a wide range of benefits, according to Kenny and Reid (1988, pp. 52-53). For example:

- Employees learn their jobs quickly and effectively.

- Employees improve their work performance and keep up-to-date in their specialist fields. Therefore, the present and future standard of work required by the organisation is highly achieved and maintained.

- Employees’ work quality is increased by reducing mistakes.

- Management benefits from the reduction in work errors by spending more time on planning and development activities and eliminating the cost of correcting errors.

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• Labour turnover among new employees can be reduced since trained employees are more likely to achieve a high level of job satisfaction.

• A reputation of an organisation for providing good training tends to attract better applicants for its vacancies.

• Employees who are offered training and development opportunities to further their careers with their present employer are less likely to be frustrated.

• It enhances the general morale of an organisation by effective organisational development and individual employee training interventions, which improve the ability of the organisation to implement and accept change.

Many authors (for example, Berge et al., 2003; Armstrong, 2009; Tseng and McLean, 2008) point out that, in a world characterised by rapid rates of technological and globalisation changes, what have emerged are quality and customer-driven services and products. This implies a shift in the role of T&D to be based on business strategic goals to target the business performance results.

T&D, in order to be effective, requires the support of top management because they can create and sustain a positive attitude towards T&D throughout their organisation. Top management determine the organisation’s policies for T&D and ensure that they are supported with the necessary resources.

As an indication of the extent of such commitment in the west, Carnevale (1989) found that American employers deliver learning to more people than does the entire US higher education system. The American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)
indicates that US organisations spent a total of $134.07 billion on employee training and development in 2008, or an average of $1,068 per employee (ASTD, 2009a).

In the United Kingdom, the Investors in People Standard was developed in the early 1990s by a partnership of leading businesses and national organisations, to help organisations to improve performance and realise objectives through the management and development of their people (Investors in People Standard, 2010). According to Investors in People Standard (2010) more than 3000 UK organisations, covering a wide spectrum of UK industries, have been recognised as Investors in People for ten years or more.

These examples reflect a recognition that advances in technology and increased competition have created a need to ensure that employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the organisation’s need. However, the cost of T&D is often considered high in many organisations because they do not analyse T&D needs properly and ignore the evaluation stage of T&D programme outcomes (Walton, 1999; Stone, 2002). Therefore, T&D should be based on a systematic approach.

### 2.2.1 A Systematic T&D Approach

Armstrong (2009) argues that T&D will fail to meet its objectives and affect organisational performance if it is conducted piecemeal and is used in isolation, without the support of top management.

In adopting a systematic approach to T&D, an organisation must identify the objectives and the means to achieve these objectives. There are many systematic approaches to T&D with no single approach universally accepted. Armstrong (2009, p.677) defines a model of four stages, as follows:
1. Identify training needs.

2. Decide what sort of training is required to satisfy these needs.

3. Use experienced and training trainers to plan and implement training.

4. Follow up and evaluate training to ensure that it is effective (see Figure 2.1).

![Systematic training model](image)

**Figure 2.1: Systematic training model**


The first stage of Armstrong’s (2009) model is training needs assessment (TNA). Training needs assessment enables training and development to be directed towards achieving organisational strategy and objectives. TNA is considered the critical stage by which T&D needs are identified. This stage determines the whole direction, purpose and process of T&D. Therefore, it should be analysed well to facilitate the conducting
of other stages. McClelland (1993) defined the TNA function as a tool to identify organisational as well as individual training needs, and provide a relatively detailed account of an organisation’s skill and knowledge base.

Many authors and HRD professionals have adopted a systems view of TNA. A model called the “Deficiency model approach” was developed by Armstrong (2001), who defines the “training gap” as the difference between what people know and can do, and what they should know and be able to do (figure 2.2). This model identifies training needs based on the available skills and knowledge and the desired skills and knowledge.

![Figure 2.2: The training gap](source: Armstrong, 2001, p. 552)

-A true training need exists when specific job tasks or behaviours are important and an employee’s proficiency in them is low.

-A training want may arise when specific job tasks or behaviours are not important and an employee’s proficiency in them is low.

TNA may be carried out at organisation, job or individual levels.
Planning T&D programmes is an important stage concerned with setting the objectives of the T&D programme and designing and planning the programme in terms of location, methods, content, time, trainers, potential costs, etc.

Training objectives should be clear, specific, measurable and tangible (Stone, 2002; Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003; McDowall and Saunders, 2010). These objectives should indicate what employees will be able to do when they return to their workplace. It has been argued that it is difficult to evaluate and assess the overall effectiveness of training without knowing what it is trying to achieve (Stone, 2002). Therefore, as long as training objectives are measurable and clear and reflect individuals’ and organisations’ needs, then evaluation criteria would be clear as well (Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003).

The content of T&D programmes should be determined by T&D needs analysis and what needs to be achieved based on the T&D objectives (Armstrong, 2001). Mumford (1991 in Burrow and Berardinelli, 2003) argues that T&D content should address real issues and problems that the management deals with.

The location of T&D is another factor that should be considered when planning T&D programmes. There are three places where training can take place: in the organisation, either on-the-job or off-the-job, and external, off-the-job. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. In organisations, on-the-job T&D may consist of coaching and teaching by managers, supervisors or trainers at the desk or at the bench. This has the advantage of actuality and immediacy. The employees work, learn and develop at the same time. They put the theory into practice during their training. Learning takes place on a day-to-day basis in a natural and informal atmosphere, “learning by doing”. The main disadvantage is that the effectiveness of the learning is influenced by the quality of the
guidance and coaching given on the job. Many managers and supervisors are not skilled enough to train. Finally, the trainee may be distracted by the environment and find it difficult to obtain the basic skills quickly (Armstrong, 2001).

In organisations, off-the-job T&D can take place in a training centre or area which has the required equipment and staff for training. The main advantage arises when employees are transferred from the training course to a job to apply their knowledge and skills in practice. The difficulty here is transferring from the training situation to real life, because the employees are isolated from actual work.

External training is usually managed by professionals and there is a chance for trainees to mix with other employees from the same or different organisations. It can be used to build highly specialized knowledge and advanced skills. It is financially better for the organisation than in-house training. The main disadvantage is that of transferring learning into practice. According to Armstrong (2001) the skills and knowledge acquired may be quickly dissipated unless they are used immediately.

Implementing T&D programmes is the main process of T&D. Monday et al. (1999) highlight a number of difficulties which commonly arise in this stage. For example most managers do not have enough time and are too busy to think about T&D. A qualified trainer has to be available, who has good communication skills, understands management issues and values the importance of T&D programmes. Record keeping is another difficulty that faces organisations when implementing T&D programmes; records are needed in order to measure the performance of the trainees before and after the training programme, to assess its effectiveness. Finally, the cost required to coordinate T&D programmes conducted outside the work place is a significant factor to consider.
The final aspect of systematic T&D, that is, evaluating the effectiveness of T&D programmes, has become critical as organisations are spending more and more on T&D. Mann (1996) states that with the huge investment in developing training strategies and programmes, the question is no longer “should we train?”, but rather, “is the training worthwhile and effective?” (p. 2). Armstrong (2001, p. 570) looks at evaluation as “an integral feature of training”. It is the comparison of objectives with outcomes to answer the question of how far the training has achieved its purpose, and to determine the cost-benefit ratio of any human resource development programme.

However, although training evaluation is a very important phase of any successful T&D programme, this phase is the most neglected phase, due to the lack of top management support, time and resources to complete the evaluation process (Mann 1996; Pineda, 2010; and Wang and Wilcox, 2006).

There are many training evaluation approaches and methods, of which Kirkpatrick’s (1996) is one of the most commonly used by many organisations (ASTD, 2009b; O’Toole, 2009; Pineda, 2010; Hale, 2003). There are four stages or levels in Kirkpatrick’s (1996) model, termed reaction, learning, behaviour and results.

The reaction level is the most basic and is concerned with participants’ reaction, opinions, impressions and attitudes toward the programme. This is widely used and usually conducted at the end of the programme through a set of questionnaires or a group discussion.

The learning level answers, ‘what do participants remember from the training session?’ (Hale, 2003). This level of evaluation aims to find how much knowledge was acquired, and what skills were developed or improved (Armstrong, 2001). Therefore,
the learning evaluation should involve the use of tests before and after the programme. This measurement is made through paper and pencil or performance tests.

The behaviour level answers ‘whether people use what they know at work’ (Hale, 2003; O’Toole, 2009). This evaluation should take place before and after the training. Therefore, time should be allowed for the change of the participants’ behaviour to take place at work (Armstrong, 2001). This level of evaluation can be done through observations, survey, and interview and performance appraisal.

Finally, the results level finds out ‘what are the outcomes of applications on the job over a period of time?’ (Hale, 2003). This level reflects the effect of the T&D programme on achievement of the objectives of the organisation. Again, the evaluation has to be based on before and after measures.

In Arab organisations, as in most organisations, evaluation of T&D programmes is reported to be neglected. If conducted at all, it is generally confined to the reaction level (Al-Athari and Zairi, 2002).

Although, as this section has shown, T&D has the potential to make a significant contribution to individual competence and organisation effectiveness, a focus on T&D alone offers a rather limited perspective. First of all, T&D as we have seen, is only one of a number of ‘learning’ activities that may take place in organisations. Moreover, T&D, like other learning activities, needs to be seen in the context of the organisation strategy and culture that shape it. Recognition of these is reflected in the transition to a broader approach, commonly termed human resource development (HRD). Today, HRD occupies a prominent place in the human resources literature. Moreover, the HRD agenda has recently acquired strong strategic significance in Saudi Arabia, as a tool for
addressing practical issues related to employment policy and national development. The following sections explore the concept and changing orientation of HRD.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation of HRD

HRD is a multidisciplinary field of study and its theoretical underpinnings are derived from multiple schools of thought. Lee (2003) described the field of HRD as a complex and evolving one; this complexity means that it is difficult to identify one specific HRD model and theory. Several disciplines or theories have been identified as contributing in varying degrees to the knowledge base of HRD, namely psychology, education, general systems theory, economics, sociology and organisational behaviour (Hatcher, 2003).

Hatcher (2003) argues that although various bodies of knowledge have influenced the field of HRD, its primary focus should be on economics, psychology, systems theory, social benefits, and ethics. Hatcher (2000, cited in Hatcher, 2003) questioned HRD professionals, scholars and practitioners in the US as to their opinions on which of the theoretical foundations were the most important to research and practice. Results indicated that psychology and economics had the greatest current impact. In relation to the theoretical foundations of HRD, Swanson (1999) proposed three primary disciplinary bases: psychology, economics and general systems theory.

Swanson (2001) proposed a three legged stool-model to illustrate what is required in HRD (Figure 2.3). First, HRD is seen as economic because it is considered a basic driver for the survival of organisations. Second, the notion of connectivity and relationships points to the relevance of systems theory; and thirdly, psychological theory acknowledges that human beings improve productivity. Each of these three theories is unique, complementary and robust. All of this leads to organisational change.
and development through a process of training and learning (Swanson, 2009). The stool has been positioned on an ethical rug because of the demands of the global economy and the unbridled conditions of the free market.

![Figure 2.3: The Three-legged Stool Model](image)

Swanson (2009) revealed a set of core beliefs held by HRD professionals. The author recognized that a number of ethical concerns were being expressed in these beliefs. These core beliefs and their interpretations are as follows:

1. Organisations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise to establish and achieve their goals. This belief constitutes the recognition that organisations are vulnerable and subject to change.

2. Human expertise is developed and maximized through HRD processes and these should be applied for the mutual long-term and/or short-term benefits of the sponsoring organisation and the individuals involved. This belief constitutes the recognition that HRD professionals are able to change how people think, respond, and behave.
3. HRD professionals are advocates of individual/group, work processes and organisational integrity. This belief constitutes the recognition that HRD professionals have access to privileged information: information that is transferable across individuals, groups and organisations.

Looking in more detail at the three theoretical ‘legs’ of the model, Swanson and Holton III (2009, p. 20) explain that the system ‘leg’ adopts a simple input–transformation–output (process) systems model (Figure 2.4). This model positions HRD as an open system within which the influence of any component can “slide up and down” from the outside environment to an HRD in a given organisation. It provides a comprehensive view of HRD in the context of the organisation and the environment. The purpose of this model is to provide HRD professionals with “general mental models for the purpose of being able to figure out the complexity and context of surrounding HRD work” (Swanson & Holton III, 2009, p. 20). The model is a five – phase system which includes the processes of analysis, proposing, creation, implementation and assessment, paralleling the other processes in an organisation. The organisational system has its mission and strategy, organisation structure, technology, and human resources. The broader environmental context is characterized by its economic, political and cultural forces.

System theory is important because it has been identified as a highly influential factor that is central to understanding how HRD functions within organisations (Swanson, 1999; Swanson & Holton III, 2009). Indeed, system theory is the unifying theory of HRD in the view of Swanson & Holton III (2009). The authors view HRD as a process or system within the larger organisational and environmental system.
On the other hand, the system model has been criticised as being incapable of dealing with the complex relationships between systems and environments (Iles & Yolles, 2003). Moreover, the influence of organisational development (OD) on HRD is missing from the input – transformation – output system model, although some writers assert the increased influence of OD on HRD. Grieves and Redman (1999) acknowledged the influence of OD on the development of HRD to the extent that HRD may be seen as “living in the shadow of OD because it is slow to recognize its roots in the debates of that discipline” (p. 81). Sukserm and Takahashi (2010) regard HRD as the strategic part of OD.

Economics is another core foundation for the field of HRD (Swanson & Holton III, 2009; Wang, 2008). Wang and Holton (2005) review economic theories insofar as they pertain to the foundations of HRD. The authors conclude that economics not only constitutes the general theoretical foundation of HRD but can also be applied to the
enhancement of HRD research and the theory building process. Swanson and Holton III (2009) mention three specific economic theory perspectives that are believed to be appropriate to the HRD field: scarce resource theory, sustainable resource theory and human capital theory.

The third core foundation for the field of HRD is industrial psychology. This covers theories of motivation, behavioural theories of job enlargement and enrichment and organisational behavioural theories of improved communication and employee participation (Swanson & Holton III, 2009).

It can be argued that HRD applies theories from its base disciplines such as education, general systems theory, economics, organisational behaviour and human relations theory (Hatcher, 2003). However, this broad theoretical base poses a difficulty when defining HRD; this will be the focus of the next section.

2.4 Definition of Human Resource Development (HRD)

HRD comprises an interdisciplinary body of knowledge, but there is no agreement as to which parts should be considered essential for HRD professionals. Swanson (2009) developed a core theoretical foundation for the discipline of HRD. According to the authors, “HRD must integrate its core psychological, economic, and system theories into a holistic HRD theory and model for practice” (p. 94).

HRD is currently experiencing a growth phase as a field of study. It is considered a relatively young academic discipline (Swanson and Holton III, 2009). In 1969 Leonard Nadler introduced HRD as a technical term to the Miami Conference of the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD). In 1970 he provided the following definition of HRD as “a series of organised activities conducted within a specified time
and designed to produce behavioural changes” (Walton, 1999, p. 57; Wilson, 2004, p. 9). There has been ongoing controversy over the definition of HRD since 1970 and this issue continues to attract many researchers (Abdullah, 2009a). As far as the literature is concerned, Nolan (2002) contends that although the term HRD is widely used there is still no single, agreed definition. He goes on to say that the literature reveals many attempts by authors to define HRD in terms of what they perceive as its key concepts. Most of the published literature on the definition of HRD has been concentrated in the West, originally in the United States and increasingly in Europe (Wang and McLean, 2007). Whilst the controversy over definition of HRD continues, Table 2.1 summarizes well the different definitions of HRD as it is reflected in the views of U.S. scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nadler (1970)</td>
<td>“HRD is a series of organized activities conducted within a specified time and designed to produce behavioural change” (p: 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones (1981)</td>
<td>“HRD is a systematic expansion of people’s work-related abilities, focused on the attainment of both organisation and personal goals” (p: 188).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLagan (1983)</td>
<td>“Training and development is identifying, assessing and-through planned learning-helping to develop the key competencies which enable individuals to perform current or future jobs” (p: 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalofsky &amp; Lincoln (1983)</td>
<td>The discipline of HRD is the study of how individuals and groups in organisations change through learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadler and Wiggs (1996)</td>
<td>“HRD is a comprehensive learning system for the release of the organisation’s potential - a system that includes both (classroom, simulated) learning experiences and experiential, on-the-job experiences that are keyed to the organisation’s reason for survival” (p: 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson (1987)</td>
<td>HRD is a process of improving an organisation’s performance through the capabilities of its personnel. HRD includes activities dealing with work design, aptitude, expertise, and motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobs (1988)</td>
<td>Human performance technology is the development of human performance systems and the management of the resulting systems, using a systems approach to achieve organisational and individual goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.Smith (1988)</td>
<td>“HRD consists of programmes and activities, direct and instructional individual that positively affect the development of the individual and the productivity and profit of the organisation” (p: 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLagan (1989)</td>
<td>“HRD is the integrated use, training and development, of career development and organisational development to improve individual and organisational effectiveness” (p: 7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watkins (1989)</td>
<td>“HRD is the field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group and organisational level of organisations. As such, it includes - but is not limited to - training, career development and organisational development” (p: 427).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadler and Nadler (1989)</td>
<td>“HRD is organized learning experiences provided by employees within a specified period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth” (p: 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.Smith (1990)</td>
<td>“HRD is the process of determining the optimum methods of developing and improving the human resource of an organisation and the systematic improvement of the performance and productivity of employees through training, education and development and leadership for the mutual attainment of organisational and personal goals” (p: 16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalofsky (1992)</td>
<td>“HRD is the study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, collectives and organisations through the development and application of learning-based interventions for the purpose of optimizing human and organisational growth and effectiveness” (p: 179).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquardt and Engel (1993)</td>
<td>HRD skills include developing a learning climate, designing training programmes, transmitting information and experience, assessing results, providing career counselling, creating organisational change, and adapting learning materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsick &amp; Watkins (1994)</td>
<td>“HRD as a combination of training, career development, and organisational development, but it must also be positioned to act strategically throughout the organisation” (p: 355).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson (1995)</td>
<td>“HRD is a process for development and unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p: 208).</td>
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Source: Weinberger, 1998 (p.77-79)

According to McGoldrick et al. (2002) UK researchers and practitioners have tried to agree on a definition of HRD but their efforts have not been successful and the concept remains frustratingly obscure, confusing and lacking in boundaries; this confusion apparently results from the huge amounts of HRM literature produced during the 1980s and 1990s. Wang and McLean (2007) argued that in the current age of globalisation, much of the effort focuses on the practice of HRD in international or cross-national
contexts. They stated that in this regard they were “unable to find any efforts at defining the field in this context” (p. 97). McLean and McLean (2001) present definitions of HRD from the viewpoints of non-U.S. scholars, specifically from the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Cote d’Ivoire, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Singapore, Thailand, and the UK. They further define HRD as “any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults’ work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organisation, community, nation, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity” (p. 322). They argue that this definition captures the elements of many definitions. They go on to say that in some countries, where the government is involved in setting HR policy, the definition of HRD reflects this involvement. McLean and McLean (2001) intended this first global definition of HRD to constitute a starting point for further discussions. Their intention was to provide a platform for examining HRD from a global perspective in the belief that this may provide researchers with new insights on the spread of HRD as a global phenomenon (Wang and McLean, 2007).

During the course of their research, McLean and McLean (2001, pp 321-322) also identified six findings in terms of factors that were affecting definitions of HRD in a global context. Firstly, the bulk of HRD literature originates from the U.S. and the UK; extensive coverage also emerges from India. Secondly, the U.S. definitions may have been influential because many overseas students are educated in the US. A third factor for consideration is the important role played by professional organisations. A fourth factor, which is related to the previous one, is that any definition of HRD is influenced by the value system of the country within which it is developed. A fifth factor concerns
the fact that in many countries HRD is still at a developing stage. A sixth factor is that for several countries the field of HRD is still seen as an integral part of its HR systems.

Hence, the difficulties in finding a definition for HRD become very apparent since each authority holds a different view on the subject (Walton, 1999). Scholars in the field disagree about whether one single definition is even a worthwhile goal, because of the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the term HRD (Sambrook, 2009; McLean and McLean, 2001; Garavan et al., 2002; Wang and McLean, 2007). Definitions of HRD are found in widely different activities of varying complexity. For example, they occur across the fields of education, development and training. As a consequence, the broad scope of HRD causes confusion and this makes it difficult to arrive at a clear definition (McCarthy et al., 2003). As a result, this raises the question, how can we define HRD in an international context if we cannot define it in one national context? (McLean and McLean, 2001). Nevertheless, it is recognized that HRD is a vital part of HRM because it is focused on strategies for managing learning processes within the organisation. As such, HRD aims to create more efficient and effective learning processes. This aim applies regardless of whether learning is conceived in terms of lifelong education or in terms of work-based learning.

A current preoccupation of HRD literature concerns how a new role for HRD can be defined and justified. It needs to be devised as a set of in-house organisational activities for facilitating the learning process. In this connection, McCarthy et al (2003) note that HRD tends to be understood more often as an important interventionist tactic for supporting organisational training processes. There are a number of specific dimensions to this enhanced role and these include increasing the learning capacities of employees; fostering an atmosphere of shared responsibility for learning; encouraging the view that
learning is a part of the everyday work experience; and creating a suitable environment for effective learning within the organisation. Garavan et al. (1999) hold a similar view. They claim that HRD comprises a number of main concerns. These include identifying and enhancing the key skills necessary to address environmental challenges and changes. Another concern is the growth of both organisations and individuals. In order to address this issue, HRD examines the ways in which training activities are managed and delivered within any given institution. In terms of definition it can be said that HRD is primarily a category of activities connected to learning and training. Chien (2007) argues that the new paradigm for HRD must be to change the attitude of employees from being passive learners to passive human capital to being more active as investors in human capital. Wang and McLean (2007) concluded that the HRD profession can be viewed at the micro level (individual and organisational), the macro level (national) and the global level (international). It is clear that definitions of HRD will have implications for its related roles and functions and these will now be explored.

2.5 HRD Roles and Functions

Aside from debates concerning the nature and theory of HRD, there are a number of arguments concerning its role and function. The term has different labels and the practice can be applied across a wide range of contexts. For example, it is variously referred to as training and development and as organisational learning. The problem of definition is a source of much confusion within the practice and at the level of top management (Garavan et al. 1995).

Garavan et al. (1998) explained that two theoretical perspectives have dominated much of the HRD literature. One perspective emphasises the “skills gap analysis” (Garavan et
al., 1998, p. 115) whilst the other emphasizes the systems perspective. Garavan et al. (1998) advocated a different view by suggesting a network/actor perspective that “conceptualizes HRD as a dynamic network of interactions between different actors and interest groups. It is based on the premise that HRD actors continuously engage in variable relationships that jointly influence HRD processes, strategies and outcomes” (p. 115). Their study of over 145 HRD actors, including senior/top management, line managers, HRD specialists, HR managers, and trade union representatives, showed “varying degrees of convergence and divergence between the different HRD actors in terms of espoused values, roles expectations, and evaluation criteria”(Garavan et al., 1998, p. 115).

The role and function of HRD has been a topic of study for many scholars and practitioners. Despite the varying definitions of HRD that have been offered over time, all have three main functions in common: career development, organisational development and training and development. McLagan (1989) points out that HRD is a process, not a department. He goes on to say, “Everyone does HRD, but some of us have adopted it either as our life’s work or as the central work focus for at least part of our careers” (p. 52). McLagan (1989) identified 11 roles for HRD: administrator, evaluator, HRD manager, HRD materials developer, career development advisor, instructor or facilitator, marketer, needs analyst, organisation change agent, programme designer, and researcher. McLagan (1989, p.53) described the relationship between HRD and HRM as a “human resource wheel”. The integrated use of training and development (T&D), organisational development (OD) and career development improves individual and organisational effectiveness, according to Swanson and Holton III (2009). The authors argue that “HRD has increasingly coalesced around personnel
training and development and organisation development as the primary field of practice” (p: 182). They look at the career development function as an extension of the development component of T&D.

**Training and Development (T&D)**

As noted previously, T&D focuses on improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals. Training involves a process of providing skills and knowledge specific to a particular task or job. Development focuses on activities that are preparation for future responsibilities (Wilson, 2004).

**Organisation Development (OD)**

French et al. (2005, p.vii) defined OD by saying “the field of OD offers a prescription for improving the goodness of fit between individuals and organisation and between organisation and environments”. Cummings and Worley (1997) defined OD as a set of planned change activities intended to help an organisation increase its effectiveness. Hanson and Lubin (1995) describe OD as an effort to help people work and live together in their organisation, more effectively and productively. The role of the HRD professional involved in OD intervention is to function as a change agent. According to O’Toole (2010) the role of OD is to work on a process of organisational renewal to ensure environments are productive, safe and satisfying places to work.

**Career Development**

Career development definitions vary and the focus can be on the individual or on the organisation. Greenhaus (1987 cited in DeSimone and Harris, 1998, p. 10) defined career development as “an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues,
themes, and tasks”. Van der Sluis and Poell (2003) describe it as “a process of professional growth brought about by work-related learning” (p. 162). This process could be individually or organisationally driven. HRD’s contribution to career development has been through formalized programmes such as “training, mentoring, tuition reimbursement, job posting, and career-planning workshops” (McDonald and Hite, 2005, p. 427). There is a strong relationship between HRD activities and career development because career plans can be implemented through the training programmes of the organisation (Egan et al., 2006; De Simone and Harris, 1998).

Although there is wide agreement on these three main components of HRD, practitioners differ in the importance they attach to each. These differences seem, at least in part, to be influenced by culture. Valkeavaara (1998) conducted a survey in five European countries (England, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Finland) to present and compare the self-assessments of HRD experts. The self-assessments were carried out with regard to their work roles, outputs realized and competencies. The findings of this study showed the culture-bound nature of HRD work and also evidenced new work roles and social change in working life. Finnish and English HRD practitioners perceived themselves as change agents, whereas in Italy they tended to be instructors and programme designers. In Germany, practitioners saw the role of instructor as still being valid. In the Netherlands, HRD practitioners perceived these roles to be equal.

Certain practitioners side-step this debate altogether. For example, Ulrich (1998) argues that HR should be defined in terms of outcomes and not processes. It should be judged not on ‘what it does’ but rather on ‘what it delivers’ (p. 29). Ulrich identifies five critical business challenges facing organisations today: global development, growth as a source of profitability, technological development, intellectual capital and continual
change. In order to meet these challenges, he argues, HR should take on a new role as a business partner (Ulrich, 1998). Walker (1994) argues that the role of HRD has altered. It has shifted from a reactive and subservient role in terms of problem solving to a proactive and entrepreneurial role. In its new role HRD can make a real difference to a company by enhancing its efforts to compete effectively in the global market.

Walton (1999), Luoma (2000), Burrow and Berardinelli (2003) argue that HR plays different roles within organisations:

- Recruitment and retention: selecting high quality workers and organizing them effectively.
- Performance measurement of existing and long serving employees.
- Analysis: aligning job contents in line with organisational objectives.
- Identifying training needs.
- Devising strategies for T&D programmes with the aim of improving current work performance and enhancing career prospects and personal growth.
- Implementing career development programmes and programmes for the management of change.
- Creating a culture that facilitates organisational learning and supports innovation and change.

According to Garavan et al. (1999) HRD should be integrated with the overall business plan of an organisation. Additionally, HRD should be viewed not as an employment cost but rather as an investment in workforce capability that will ultimately benefit the organisation.
HRD refers to a process of development and change through learning. It puts emphasis on the learning process: how, what and where individuals learn. In an organisational context HRD is not focused on lifelong learning (Walton, 1999). Instead it highlights the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities that make employees able to work at an optimum level in an organisational context. Hence, within the context of an organisation HRD refers to work-related learning strategies that are facilitated by an integrated and holistic approach (Walton, 1999). According to Swanson and Arnold (1997) (cited in Walton, 1999) the meaning of HRD, in an organisational context derives from its connection to performance. This means that HRD practitioners must be able to demonstrate the benefit and value of their activities to their organisational employers (Walton, 1999). Certain authors (for example, Hill and Stewart, 2000, and Taylor et al. (2004) do not make a distinction between the term “training and development” and the term HRD. They view the actions of training and development in terms of the functional element of HRD. This wider philosophy of HRD enables them to use the terms interchangeably. McIntyre (2004) identified three major strategic roles for HRD: HRD involvement in shaping the competitive strategies of the organisation; the use of HRD strategies to support the competitive strategy of the organisation, and the development and implementation of HRD’s own function and strategies. The awareness reflected in the foregoing discussion, namely that HRD can and should deliver long-term benefits to the organisation though a linkage with the more general organisational strategy has led to a new, strategic conception of HRD which will now be discussed.

2.6 Strategic Human Resource Development

The concept of strategic human resource development (SHRD) is emerging as an extension of HRD. Organisations are currently witnessing a significant shift from
traditional practices towards strategic HRM practices (Areiqat et al., 2010). This shift emphasizes a particular presupposition about the learning process: the presupposition is that organisational policy makers must treat learning as a deliberate business process rather than as an “accident” (Mayo and Lank, 1994 cited in Walton, 1999). This means that HRD activities, strategies, policies and plans should be derived from and integrated with the overall strategies, policies and plans of the organisation. Thus SHRD involves the long-term development of people within the organisation in order to enhance organisational effectiveness (Tseng and McLean, 2008). Strategic learning means that everyone in an organisation must be involved in appropriate learning. To make HRD strategies successful every employee in the organisation should learn and everybody should have the potential to improve. Therefore, learning, training and development should be available to everyone in the organisation.

Swanson (1995) views HRD as “a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p. 208). Swanson’s definition can be regarded as a more realistic definition because it allows HRD professionals to contribute to the mission and strategic goals of the organisation. Beaver and Hutchings (2004) stress that HRD, at its most basic, increases quality, workforce competence, skills development, motivation and commitment to the organisation. At its most sophisticated, HRD provides employees with the requisite skills and knowledge to respond to changes in technology. Strategic HRD focuses on “linking training and development to organisational objectives, and responding to changes in technology and other factors in the external environment (Beaver and Hutchings, 2004, p. 86). HRD is important for public and private organisations because as Swart et al. (2005, p. 3) stated, “Ideas for
innovation, quality and continuous improvement, as well as important inputs …come from people and not from machines”. However according to Jarvalt and Randma-Liiv (2010) the implementation of strategic HRD may be affected by the wider political support in order for it to be successful in the public sector.

A number of authors have dealt with the topic of SHRD. However Garavan (1991) has provided some of the most important work on the subject. It was Garavan’s belief that in order to contribute significantly to organisational success HRD must function strategically (1991, p. 31). Garavan (1991) defined SHRD as “the strategic management of training and development, and of management professional education interventions, so as to achieve the objectives of the organisation, while at the same time, ensuring the full utilisation of the knowledge in details and skills of individual employees” (p. 17).

Garavan (1991) identifies nine important characteristics of SHRD. These characteristics are connected to the major factors influencing the effectiveness of training and development within an organisation. Work by Garavan is often used as the basis from which to examine the concept of SHRD.

The main characteristics of SHRD are outlined in the next paragraphs. For the sake of simplicity Garavan’s (1991) terminology is used to label the characteristics. However, it should be noted that the understanding of each item is developed with reference to a variety of authors.

1. Integration with organisational missions and goals

Garavan (1991) points out that the need for integration into business planning is critical for SHRD, as is a contribution to the goals and the mission of the organisation. HRD
can help to form an organisation and to put its strategies into practice when it is viewed as a strategic lever (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). The business environment requires HRD to play a pivotal role in supporting and shaping business strategy (Torraco and Swanson, 1995). This concept is reflected in Lee’s (1996) model of training maturity, which presents six levels of organisational maturity, as follows:

- Training and learning are processes through which strategy is formulated.
- Training and learning possibilities help to shape strategy.
- Training is the means for implementing corporate strategy and achieving change.
- Training is integrated with operational management.
- Isolated tactical training.
- No systematic training.

This model of training maturity represents the level of sophistication and the extent to which training helps to shape and formulate the organisation’s strategy. McCracken and Wallace (2000) argue that HRD should shape and influence organisational missions and goals.

2. Top management support

The critical factors for successful HRD activities are organisational strategy and the support and commitment of top management (Taylor, 1996). The role of top management should be involved and supportive: active rather than passive (Harrison, 1997; Garavan, 1991). Professionals working in HRD must be able to clearly demonstrate how T&D programmes can benefit both individuals and organisations in terms of growth and performance. This is vital if they are to secure the commitment and
support of top managers. This support is very important in ensuring the success of the organisation (Jarvait and Randma-Liiv, 2010). Therefore, organisations have to adopt a wider perspective and accept that HRD is an important part of organisational development. If HRD is viewed as a process of long-term investment, then top management should provide encouragement and guidance for it.

Support for and commitment to HRD varies from organisation to organisation and from country to country, for a variety of reasons. Gilley and Gilley (2002 cited in Swart et al. (2005, p.98) provide some reasons why the HRD function may be perceived unfavourably:

- HRD programmes are considered to be ‘outside’ the mainstream of the business and viewed as internal training houses
- Training and trainers are not seen as critical to the success of the organisation
- The outcomes and impact of training are not valued
- HRD practitioners are not seen to be living in the real world.

Successful SHRD depends on the organisational climate. According to Twigg and Albon (1992, cited in Walton, 1999) a favourable organisational climate recognises that active learning starts at the top. In a favourable organisational climate, senior managers embrace an open active approach rather than portraying HRD as an expensive “treatment” and business and HRD managers operate in partnership. Hence, organisations have to provide an environment that is conducive to learning, where learning is encouraged, nurtured and supported.

3. Environmental Scanning

HRD, like any other organisational activities, should be responsive to development and change in the external and internal organisational environment. Organisations should
explore the national and international environment in order to cope with the changes that are taking place.

4. HRD policies and plans

A fourth characteristic of SHRD is the formulation of plans and policies in HRD and their integration with the business and organisational policies. Garavan (1991) argues that in order to be strategic HRD must formulate plans and policies which are integrated with business plans and policies. This is one of the most important factors because it enables HRD to influence business plans rather than reacting to them (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). Armstrong (2009) stressed that all organisations are required to have HR policies in which HRD policy may be charted along with other specific policies under the umbrella of HR policy. He goes on to say that organisations with HRD policies are viewed as more committed to continually developing the skills and abilities of their employees, than organisations without any policy. McCracken and Wallace (2000) described the HRD plan as a document that contains details of training interventions, an outline of training needs and the specific training programmes necessary to meet those needs. It also contains details of the methods and resources required. Wang (2008) highlights the role played by international agencies in helping governments in developing countries with national HRD planning and policy development.

5. Line management commitment and involvement

Line managers have a central role to play in HRD activities. They are key stakeholders and actors; therefore, they should be involved and work in partnership with HRD specialists on both operational and strategic issues (Garavan, 1991; Heraty and Morley,
However Heraty and Morley (1995) argue that line managers lack the necessary formal training to handle HRD activities. They go on to present the results of a study which reveals the active role that line managers play in the training and development process. However, this role is confined to the operational aspects of T&D, and is less concerned with policy and planning activities. McCracken and Wallace (2000) and Heraty and Morley (1995) stress that it is important to involve line managers in HRD policies and planning, so that they can appreciate the value of T&D in terms of its work improvement. In situations where line managers and HRD staff work in partnership over HRD issues Harrison (1997) and McCracken and Wallace (2000) stress the need for shared ownership. However, the position of line managers is often complicated by cultural factors.

6. Existence of complementary HRM activities

In the view shared by Garavan (1991) and Harrison (1997) HRD is integral to both the HRM package and to HRM strategies. According to Garavan et al. (1995), HRD is ‘a vital if not the pivotal component’ (p. 5). HRD is an essential part of HRM in all organisations. As such HRD strategies should arise from and be integral to the HRM strategies and plans of any organisation (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). Stewart and McGoldrick (1996) suggest that HRM and HRD are in fact parallel pathways because each one emphasizes a similar aspect of corporate strategy. As such, each parallel pathway cited by Stewart and McGoldrick (1996) begins by outlining its vision and mission and ends by defining the practice necessary to the realization of that vision and mission. HRM’s role is recruitment, selection, motivation and reward; HRD’s role is to provide learning, education and training to the selected workforce. Clearly HRM and
HRD have separate plans and policies and each fulfils a different function in the overall corporate strategy.

7. Expanded trainer role

Garavan (1991); Harrison (1997); McCracken and Wallace (2000) emphasize the important role of trainers. In their view, SHRD activities require innovators and consultant trainers as opposed to training programmes. According to Talbot (1993) the role of trainers should incorporate a number of elements. It needs to be adaptive (the ability to adapt staff knowledge competencies to fit the existing system; adoptive (the ability to encourage staff to subscribe to new values or attitudes; and innovative (proactive in the sense that it informs and influences organisational change). In view of the aforementioned, trainers must be well-skilled and well-qualified in order to manage the training process successfully.

8. Recognition of culture

Before discussing culture, one should make a distinction between two different but interrelated concepts: national culture and organisational culture. Hofstede (2001, p. 9) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. In organisational behaviour, organisational culture defines “how those in the organisation should behave in a given set of circumstances. It affects all, from the most senior manager to the humblest clerk” (Burnes, 2004, p. 170).

HRD can only function effectively with both an awareness of corporate culture and an acknowledgement of the need for organisations to align their cultural contexts with their business strategies (Garavan, 1991). Culture is perhaps the most important
consideration in terms of delivering and assessing HRD (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). Organisational culture is no exception to this and consequently this has an impact on training and development programmes. It is necessary for organisational culture to embrace change and to recognise this as a strategic advantage, in terms of facilitating the learning process within the organisation and influencing the life cycle of the organisation (Garavan et al., 1995).

9. Emphasis on evaluation

Garavan (1991) makes it clear that in order to be effective HRD activities must be evaluated to ascertain whether business needs have been met. Here, the main emphasis is on the evaluation of cost-effectiveness. However, in terms of timescale, the evaluations of cost-effectiveness may lead to difficulties in evaluating HRD. The focus on achieving quantifiable results within a short timeframe conflicts with the long-term timeframe required for investment in HRD. Also some of the benefits of this (such as culture change) are intangible and as such unquantifiable (Harrison, 1997; Lee, 1996; McCracken and Wallace, 2000).

Tseng and McLean (2008) concluded that organisations that learn and develop their SHRD have more chances to gain and integrate these nine HRD outcomes in the process of learning.

Harrison (1997) argues that in order to make organisational and individual growth possible, then SHRD must align T&D with the overall business plan of the organisation, expressed in its missions and goals. This will enhance the skills, knowledge, capabilities and motivation of the workforce, thus enabling both individuals and the business to expand at all levels. Luoma (2000) puts forward a different view of SHRD;
this view suggests that SHR should be needs based in order to address possible deficiencies in workforce skills. This approach provides an opportunity for workers to acquire skills and capabilities that can then be used to further the competitive advantage of the business. Whilst McCracken and Wallace (2000) build on Garavan’s (1991) work on SHR characteristics, they argue that Garavan’s work does not place sufficient emphasis on the concept of strategy, and they develop his nine characteristics to enhance the strategic focus. McCracken and Wallace (2000) offer a model of SHR in which there is a distinction between three categories of HRD orientation: training, HRD and SHR; these are shown in Table 2.2. In this model, the characteristics of the HRD category correspond to Garavan’s (1991) definitions, while the SHR column reflects McCracken and Wallace’s (2000) own interpretation of strategic focus.

McCracken and Wallace (2000) define SHR as the creation of a learning culture within which a range of training, development and learning strategies respond to the corporate strategy and, also, help to shape and influence this strategy. HRD should play a proactive role rather than consisting of reactive interventions in response to specific organisational problems. Garavan et al. (1995) argued that HRD cannot be integrated into strategy unless senior managers want that to take place and this depends on whether senior managers are able to identify environmental trends in HRD. The ability of managers to identify salient factors can be substantially improved if the organisation demonstrates a positive HRD culture and a learning approach to strategy. Walton (1999) commented that the 1990s saw a re-evaluation of the importance of HRD issues in terms of their strategic contribution at the level of top management. Now, HRD is at the top of the strategic agenda in both developed and developing countries. For example, according to Stewart (1999) most countries have identified vocational education and
training (VET) as a vitally important public policy issue and as such, it is a top priority on their national political agendas.

2.7 Conclusion

HRD can be seen as a mature development of the Training and Development (T&D) concept, concerned with developing employees’ skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet organisational needs. HRD is a complex concept because it is underpinned by several disciplines and as a result it is difficult to reach a unified definition. Hence, there is wide variation in the roles and functions ascribed to

### Table 2.2: A model of SHRD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>HRD</th>
<th>SHRD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Admin/delivery</td>
<td>Learning consultancy</td>
<td>Strategic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategically not very mature in HRD terms</td>
<td>Quite mature in HRD terms</td>
<td>Strategically very mature in HRD terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Characteristics | 1. Poor integration with organisational missions and goals  
                  2. Little environmental scanning  
                  3. Little environmental scanning  
                  4. Few HRD plans and policies  
                  5. Little line manager commitment and involvement  
                  6. Lack of complementary HRM activities  
                  7. Lack of expanded trainer role  
                  8. Little recognition of culture  
                  9. Little emphasis on evaluation | 1. Integration with organisational missions and goals  
                  2. Top management support  
                  3. Environmental scanning  
                  4. HRD plans & policies  
                  5. Line manager commitment & involvement  
                  6. Existence of complementary HRM activities  
                  7. Expanded trainer role  
                  8. Recognition of culture  
                  9. Emphasis on evaluation | 1. Shaping organisational missions and goals  
                  2. Top management leadership  
                  3. Environmental scanning by senior management  
                  4. HRD strategies, plans and policies  
                  5. Strategic partnerships with line management  
                  6. Strategic partnerships with HRM  
                  7. Trainers as organisational change consultant  
                  8. Ability to influence corporate culture  
                  9. Emphasis on cost effectiveness evaluation |
| Learning culture | No | Weak | Strong |

*Source: McCracken and Wallace (2000, p. 434)*
HRD. Moreover, HRD is interpreted differently and supported to varying degrees in different cultures. Consequently, when HRD principles that have originated in the West have been applied internationally, the nature and activities of HRD differ in each country, although there is wide agreement that it includes T&D, OD and career development components. An important trend has recently emerged in literature and practice: the view that HRD activities should play an influential strategic and proactive role in organisations, rather than a reactive role. Leadership, commitment and support from top management and line management involvement are the key factors in successful SHRD. On the one hand, some authors argue that SHRD does not seem to occur in many organisations. On the other hand, some authors view HRD as being at the top of the strategic agenda. This is because there is an increasing awareness of the contribution that a highly skilled workforce can make to the organisation (Walton, 1999).

As previously noted, HRD is beginning to assume prominence in Saudi Arabian employment policy. Yet it has been observed that certain important aspects of strategic HRD, notably a systematic and strategic approach to T&D, are reportedly lacking in Arab organisations generally. Such claims, together with the comments in the literature on the culture-bound nature of HRD, serve to highlight the importance of examining in some detail the cultural context of the research and the existing knowledge of HRD in that context. This is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH: HRD AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE ARAB WORLD

3.1 Introduction

Arab countries have increasingly begun to acknowledge the important development role played by HRM and HRD. HRM and HRD are recognized as key to the modernization process in terms of the contribution they make towards creating organisational effectiveness, increasing competitiveness and globalizing industries. They also ensure the investment of adequate capital, the commitment of governments and the provision of highly qualified and skilled workers. The lack of able, educated and appropriately trained workers (particularly at management level) is one of the most urgent problems facing developing countries. Arab countries are no exception and this has resulted in Arab governments and businesses devoting more time and attention to HRD activities (Atiyyah, 1993a; Al-Madhoun and Anabloui, 2003; Alsahlawi and Gardener, 2004). Muna (1980) also draws attention to the context within which Arab managers reside and work. The social structure of the Arab world is ruled by three specific aspects: religion, family and friendship. It is not possible to comprehend fully the way in which management systems operate HRD without first taking into consideration these structural aspects of Arab managerial culture. This chapter will recount what has been the case regarding HRD in Arab organisations. It should be noted that to date there is very little literature on this topic and this is especially true concerning HRD practices in Saudi Arabia.

The specific aim of this chapter is to identify and explore the main cultural and organisational factors that influence managerial practices, including the effectiveness of HRD, in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Moreover, the experiences of some
Arab countries are explored regarding their HRD functions. Following on from this, the role of HRD in Saudi Arabia under successive development plans is then examined.

3.2 Factors that Influence Managerial Practices in Arab Organisations

Previous studies of management theory and practice in Arab organisations have drawn attention to the importance of the wider cultural and political context and its effect on managerial behaviour. Scholars are increasingly aware that a number of crucial factors are involved in moulding current organisational practices and behaviour. These factors have been identified as Islam, tribalism, family, state control and the influence of Western style management theory and practice (Ali, 1990; 2009; 2010; Dadfar, 1993; Weir, 2003; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006; Branine and Pollarde, 2010). The following section highlights these factors.

The Arab world formerly embodied 22 states with a combined population of over 300 million and more than 90 per cent of them are Muslims (Branine and Pollard, 2010). Every area of Arab life is affected by the rules and principles of Islamic religion and culture and managerial practices are no exception. For Arab people, the Islamic religion exerts a dominating influence in all areas of life. The Islamic religion is founded on a belief in God, hard work and equality among people. It also emphasises honesty, commitment, generosity, trust, loyalty and flexibility (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). Any plan to facilitate organisational progress and change must first acknowledge the influence of the Islamic work ethic and norms (Ali, 1995; Ali 2005).

Having said this, some recent writers have questioned the extent to which Islam influences management practice, suggesting that other factors may confuse or operate alongside Islamic values. The majority of Arab countries depend on a mixture of
Islamic and civil law; these countries pay scant attention to Islamic management (Branine and Pollard, 2010). Islamic or Shar’ah law differs from common and civil law because it is founded on the interpretation of the Holy Quran (words of God) and the Hadith (words of the Prophet Mohammed peace be upon him). Most Arab countries use those sections of Islamic law which relate to particular areas of social life and this includes family and inheritance laws. Civil laws that have been adopted from the West are used to govern matters concerning the economy and management (Branine and Pollard, 2010). Hence, Arab management issues are affected by both traditional norms and the non-Islamic norms and values of different Arab cultures (Ali, 2010; Dadfar, 1993). Dadfar (1993) also makes the point that Islamic values exist at a theoretical rather than a practical level. In his recent study Ali (2010) concluded that although there is a commitment to Islamic teaching in the majority of Arab countries, HR practices do not adhere to the prescriptions of Islam.

Aside from religion, the roots of Arab culture are very powerful and they originate from a long historical and religious tradition, coupled with both previous and current political and economic ideologies (Atiyyah, 1993b). Al-Faleh (1987) suggests that both individual and managerial practices and every type of management development programme that is offered will be subject to the influence of Arab culture. Al-Faleh (1987, p. 20) stated that “The Arab culture has certain distinctive characteristics which dominate managerial thinking and behaviour”. Family is one of the main influences dominating Arab social and cultural life. It exerts a huge effect on the theory and practice of management within Arab organisations, its impact far exceeding that of either demographic or other organisational variables.
Muna (1980) argues that the thoughts, beliefs, and decision making practices of Arabian managers are largely influenced by their obligations towards family, friends and the wider community. Ali and Shakhis (1989) contend that a family man who takes care of his family business and is ready to lend a helping hand when necessary would, in their view, constitute the ideal type of Arab manager. This type of man is generally perceived as honourable, knowledgeable, giving and dutiful towards his wider family and community. The idea of family is very important in Arab society because familial structures foster bonds of loyalty and duty which elicit respect from individual family members. Consequently the Arab peoples firmly believe that personal and social relationships (not formal procedures) constitute the primary means by which to ensure efficiency (Tayeb, 2005). Al-Faleh (1987) and Muna (1980) observe that Arab people depend on powerful family connections, nepotism and social relationships in order to ensure that tasks are completed within the organisation. They do not rely on individual qualification, experience, or on skills, competencies and training.

The Arab Gulf states are organized in such a way that family affiliations take precedence, followed by clan and tribal affiliations (Dadfar, 1993). The tribal system ensures that power is controlled centrally through the tribal chief or (Sheikh). Ali (1995) has coined the term “Sheikocracy” (p.7) to refer to this system of autocratic power. “Sheikocracy” is characterized by a highly stratified structure of authority. The personality and power of individuals dictates the formal rules and regulations and how they should be applied. This system prioritizes personal relationships and networks at the expense of efficiency. Although they may be in positions of public office, Arab people continue to operate under the influence of traditional Arab culture. Hence Arab
public servants will often prioritize the needs of their families over the requirements of the state (Jabra, 1989).

Arab society is collectivist and it is structured according to a rigid and paternalistic hierarchy. Young people must respect their elders and those in junior positions must obey those in senior positions. Age guarantees status and authority in all Arab countries. It is taken to indicate that a person is trustworthy and reliable. Consequently, leaders are chosen on the basis of age. This applies in the home, in the tribe and in the workplace (Branine and Pollard, 2010).

The particular economic and political context must also be acknowledged as an additional factor that influences Arab management practices. In relation to this point, Atiyyah (1993c) contends that in response to an extremely unstable political situation, Arab businessmen have tended to prefer low-risk, short-term investment. Their decision-making processes are largely intuitive and based on business sense and not on salient and dependable information. Al-Faleh (1987) notes that this has an effect on Arab management planning: in terms of management style it is characteristically reactive and crisis-oriented and not proactive.

Regarding the influence of economic and political factors, it must be recognized that the rapid growth of the Arab states is largely due to their dependence on expatriate labour coupled with Western management expertise and technology (Branine and Pollard, 2010). According to a study by Wilkins (2001a), since the 1990s Gulf countries have been subject to slow economic growth rates and comparatively high birth rates. Increasing numbers of women are joining the workforce and the unemployment rate is rising. Unemployment is a serious problem for nationals, especially for young people. In response governments have designed a number of strategies aimed at increasing
levels of participation amongst nationals. For example, these include national development plans, raising levels of educational attainment and the introduction of vocational training.

The Arab Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are richer and more politically stable than their non-Arab counterparts. Throughout the GCC, the governments are the major employers of citizens. The governments created many jobs when they had high incomes, but when the incomes dropped, they stopped employment in government sectors (Harry, 2007). Common (2008) argued that the resulting high level of public sector employment for nationals constitutes a form of social obligation and allows the distribution of wealth. He described the GCC states as rentier states “relying on direct transfers from the international economy in the form of oil revenues” (p.182).

Related to this strong government role, Assad (2002) discovered a number of distinctive features in Arab organisations: a high degree of centralization, an oppressive bureaucracy, a lack of effective communication, an absence of management skills and the misjudgement of performance issues. For example, personal interests are given priority over organisational interests. Weir (2003) mentioned that red-tape, bureaucracy, delay and inefficiency are widespread in these organisations.

The last of the influences identified at the beginning of this section is Western influence. The GCC states have achieved increasing levels of affluence and this has given them greater access to European and North American models of management theory and practice. Since the 1950s a large number of GCC citizens and their children,
including those from Saudi Arabia, have been educated in the USA and in Europe, especially the UK (Hunt and At-Twaijri, 1996). According to Weir (2000)

“More Gulf managers hold a university degree than their counterpart in the US, UK, France, Germany and Japan. Gulf managers receive more management training per year than American and British managers” (p. 505).

Western management theory and practice is widely acclaimed and a number of management professionals have undertaken training programmes of one sort or another in the West (Branine and Pollard, 2010). According to Wilkins (2001a) the management development programmes that are carried out in the Gulf States adhere to Western business school curricula. The majority of training professionals regard Western university curricula and awarding bodies as appropriate to the Gulf region. In addition, Wilkins noted that only a very small number of indigenous training professionals exist; consequently both the public and private training centres are forced to rely on expatriate trainers (Wilkins, 2001a). However, given the cultural differences between the Arab world and the West, it may be questioned how far it is possible or appropriate to transfer ideas and practices from one to the other. This issue is addressed in the next section.

3.3 The Applicability of Western Management Techniques and Theories in non-Western Contexts

A large number of Islamic and Arab researchers have expressed the view that national culture is a factor that not only affects people at an individual level but also affects performance in Arab organisations (for example, Ali, 2009; Tayeb, 2005). The impact of socio-cultural factors is one of the main worries when attempts are made to transfer Western models of HRD theory and practice into Arab organisations. This is when
differences begin to emerge, because Arab organisations are structured in accordance with seniority as opposed to merit, and the existing management style is reactive rather than proactive.

Arab countries have invested a huge amount of money, time and effort into adopting Western managerial development practices and theories. As a result, the majority of Arab countries are adequately supplied with technologies that originated in the West and they are already utilizing Western systems and methods. Whilst this is the case it should be noted that in the Arab world these techniques and methods are employed and managed differently. This raises questions as to whether methods and practices which are effective in an American or British context will also be effective in the Saudi Arabian context or in any other organisation in an Arab country.

In order for scholars and practitioners to answer this question, it has become a vital goal to understand how organisations evolve and how they interact with the wider social and cultural context. Both HRM & HRD originated in the West and the West has subsequently developed into a globally dominant economic force. It is for this reason that its organisational development theories have attracted a worldwide audience. As a result, those in the world of business management can access HRD techniques and programmes that can be examined and utilized in different cultures and places. This situation has been made feasible by two main developments: “rapid advancement in the material world, and improvement in behavioural science” (Ali, 2005, p. 212).

For this reason, Attiyah (1993a) advises that curricula and practices be adequately tried out in order to assess how well they might apply to the national culture. It is recommended that cultural differences are taken into account during the design and
implementation stages in order to avoid any potential tension between culture and T&D programmes. For example, HRD specialists must give due awareness to the various cultural issues that are judged too sensitive to be openly discussed: these include religion, politics, and Islamic issues. Attention must be paid to these issues when Western managerial theories and practices are transferred to the Arabic context. This will ensure that the resulting HRD programmes are sensitive to the specific cultural context.

Questions have, however, been raised regarding whether these theories are applicable to foreign cultures, especially Islamic culture. Many scholars argue that management theory is influenced by specific sets of values, beliefs, and norms coupled with the wider social environment. Therefore, it is questionable whether Western theories and experiences are transferrable to non-Western countries because management practice is part of the local culture, and cannot be imported in packaged form (Ali, 2005).

According to the tenets of Islamic belief, both the theory and practice of HRD can be seen to encompass ideas about human existence and human capabilities. HRD expresses man’s need to make a difference, to act dutifully and to change society for the better. The Quranic teachings emphasize the value of the collective. The Quran states, “God does not change the condition of people unless they change what is in their heart” (Ar-Rad, 13, verse 11). The Holy Quran and the Hadith exert a huge influence on knowledge and education. The Holy Quran contains many quotations that serve to emphasize the importance of knowledge and the importance of work. For example, “God will raise up in rank those of you who believe and have been given knowledge” (Mojadallah, 58, verse 11) The Prophet Mohammed recognized that people have different capabilities and thus they are capable of different levels of understanding. He
claimed that the learning process enables individuals to develop and to improve themselves.

“Knowledge is obtained through studying. The dialectic relationship among the learned individuals, knowledge, and work is captured in the Prophet’s saying, “Learning people, knowledge, and work are blessed. When those who have knowledge do not act upon it, they are not blessed; but work and knowledge are always blessed” (Cited in Ali, 2010, p.704).

Ali (2005) argues that Islamic assumptions about change do share some similarities with the Western organisational development model. Both aim to make the organisation more competitive and to make it more human. Some Western organisational development practitioners have reported successful change in certain Islamic countries (Ali, 1989). This suggests that it is possible to apply or adapt certain management principles and practices to Islamic contexts, if they are applied with sensitivity to local conditions. According to Ali (2005) a range of organisational development (OD) interventions have been used in the Islamic world. He goes on to say that both public and private organisations in Middle East countries have made intensive use of personnel system methods, management information and financial control systems, and survey-guided development efforts. However, he claims there are differences attributable to differences in national culture.

In this regard, it is useful to refer to Hofstede’s (2001) study on cultural values and their implications. He identified five dimensions of culture, which differ between developed and developing countries, and even between countries at similar levels of development.

1. Power-distance

2. Uncertainty avoidance

3. Collectivism vs. individualism
4. Femininity vs. masculinity


The first of Hofstede’s dimensions, power-distance, concerns the existence of a hierarchy. The greater the power distance, the more hierarchical the social structures, with more formal modes of interaction, deference towards superiors, and less participation of subordinates in decision-making.

Uncertainty Avoidance is the second dimension of Hofstede. This dimension is concerned with levels of tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. The higher the uncertainty avoidance, the greater the tendency to prefer clearly defined social roles and responsibilities, and to have behaviours governed by rules and regulations.

The relationship between the individual and the group is the third of Hofstede’s dimensions. The higher the score on this dimension, the more the needs and aspirations of the individual are paramount. A lower score indicates a more collectivist culture, where individual needs and wishes are to some extent subordinated to those of the family or community, and members are expected to act collaboratively.

Hofstede’s fourth cultural dimension is masculinity vs. femininity. This refers to the extent to which the culture prioritizes and reflects traditional “masculine” characteristics (authority, rigidity, assertiveness) versus traditional “feminine” attributes (caring, conciliatory, and relationship-oriented).

Hofstede subsequently identified a fifth dimension, which is called Long vs. Short Term Orientation. Long vs. Short-term Orientation identifies a core set of cultural values, which include time orientation. High scores on this dimension reflect a tendency toward
a future-minded mentality and tend to be associated with persistence, ordering relationships by status, thrift, and having a sense of shame.

Hofstede’s analysis for the Arab World, which includes the countries of Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, found large Power Distance (80) and Uncertainty Avoidance (68). The score for Masculinity was 52, only little higher than the average of 50.2 for all the countries. The lowest dimension for the Arab countries was Individualism, with a score of 38, compared to an average of 64 (www.geert-hofstede.com).

These cultural values inevitably affect management practice. According to Ali (1989) there is a preference amongst Arab managers for a collectivist approach to decision making instead of an individualist approach. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that in terms of the Islamic work ethic, collectivism is a highly valued political principle.

Al-Faleh (1987) sums up the ways in which culture exerts an influence on Arabian managerial style.

- Within the organisation there is a formal hierarchy and employees act in subservience to this hierarchy. The predominant management style is authoritarian, where delegation of authority is very low, corresponding to the high Power Distance.

- Individuals within an organisation are driven by bonds of affiliation (Collectivism) and the need for power (Power Distance) as opposed to being
driven by performance goals. As a result, conformity to social protocols is vital.

- Managers are dedicated to fulfilling their social duties and obligations and this takes precedence over business objectives. This stance can be seen as reflecting the high collectivism and uncertainty avoidance of these states.

- The bonds of kinship and friendship are seen as vital to the success of group and team working.

- Nepotism is a way of life and as such it is completely accepted. Consequently, managers play a familial role within their organisations. This means that loyalty is valued over efficiency and hospitality or the open-door tradition is the rule. This tradition is integrated into the formal and informal structures of all organisations.

- Timekeeping is less crucial than in Western culture and society. Managers depend on the support of family and friends to ensure that tasks are completed within the organisation.

- There is a strong adherence to the open-door tradition. It is an integral part of the “underwritten” or “informal” organisational structure.

Arab culture is based on face-to-face interaction, so managers and their employees prefer direct contact with each other, because this way of interaction produces trust, support and commitment (Branine and Pollard, 2010; Tayeb, 2005). According to Ali (1995) Arab managers are focused on the people around them; thus the approval and respect of their peers is more highly valued than individual fame. Saudi Arabia, as an Arab Gulf state, shares these characteristics. However, Mellahi (2006) identifies
differences in the strength of the various dimensions based on a comparative study between Saudi culture and the rest of the Arab world based on Hofstede’s model (see figure 3.1)

![Figure 3.1: Comparative national cultural dimension: Saudis and Arab world](image)

**Figure 3.1: Comparative national cultural dimension: Saudis and Arab world**

*Source: Mellahi (2006, p. 104)*

Mellahi’s scores show Saudi Arabia as higher in power-distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity than the rest of the Arab world. It is expected that differences on these dimensions of culture will be translated into different management practices, including HRD. Therefore in the following section Arab HRD practices will be examined.

### 3.4 HRD Practices in Arab Organisations

There are a number of problems and barriers facing HRD in Arab organisations. According to Atiyyah (1993a) the majority of training programmes in Arab states are
not effective. This can be attributed to insufficient training needs analysis or assessment curricula that are not relevant, training techniques that are not appropriate and absence of evaluation. In addition, the issue of training and development is not viewed as a vital function that should be undertaken on a regular basis.

The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is in theory a fundamental part of the design and evaluation process for all training programmes. However, research by Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) revealed a complete lack of systematic processes for judging training and educational needs. There are a number of reasons for this, including the absence of dependable information, an unstable political context, the economic situation and the rapidly altering social context. In a similar vein Agnaia (1996) contends that the lack of a systematic approach to training can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, training programmes are not designed in response to needs which have already been identified and this creates problems with evaluation. Secondly there are economic, political and social factors which effectively limit these programmes. With respect to the information required to determine training needs, many Arab organisations depend on various channels: primarily on supervisors, and trainees themselves. They are less dependent on formally identified task requirements or job descriptions, and specific career pathways.

According to Agnaia (1996) TNA is conditional on the opinions, evaluations and experiences of the management. Agnaia contends that training needs are assessed by supervisors on the basis of training records. As such, there may be a discrepancy between the assessment and the real situation which can be attributed to various factors including family connections, nepotism, kinship ties and personal connections amongst supervisors and employees. Atiyyah (1993a) criticizes training curricula designed by
Arab training centres. As an example, he notes that T&D programmes for line managers and supervisory level sometimes include several sessions on the planning and decision-making process, despite the fact that Arab organisations in general are over-centralized, and these functions are performed by top management. Agnaia (1996) also discovered that managers who are tasked with T&D needs assessment are invariably unqualified; hence they do not possess the requisite skills and knowledge for the task at hand.

The most crucial stage of the T&D process (and yet the least recognized) is the evaluation stage. The failure to recognize T&D as an investment means that there is no rigorous evaluation process. Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) investigated this phenomenon by carrying out empirical research in Kuwait; organisations. Their research revealed that only a small number of organisations considered evaluation as a crucial task. Most organisations evaluated their T&D programmes infrequently, using questionnaires, observation and performance records. The researchers discovered that the majority of organisations surveyed were reliant on level one of Kirkpatrick’s evaluation model (trainee’s reaction). This was the main method used for evaluating their T&D programmes.

Such shortcomings may be due to shortage of skilled personnel, and to a failure to recognize the strategic potential of HRD. Atiyyah (1993a) draws attention to the fact that due to the skills shortage, certain Arab countries recruit foreign managers to fill posts that are usually reserved for nationals. This situation reveals an obvious need for effective HRD programmes in Arab countries. A further crucial problem has arisen concerning HRD practices in Arab organisations: this concerns the idea that training can be viewed as a “stand alone” process with no discernable ties to the other organisational components that comprise the whole development system (Abdalla and Al-Homoud,
1995). For a number of Arab organisations, time that is set aside for training purposes is regarded as holiday or leisure time for the trainees who take a break from their usual jobs to attend the lecture class. As a consequence these organisations fail to take account of how HRD can be of great strategic importance in terms of realizing organisational goals. Agnaia (1996) makes the added point that in the majority of Arab organisations training is regarded as a matter of choice. As such it does not form an integral part of the organisational improvement process.

Another reason for shortcomings in HRD practice is the impact of culture. Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) also contend that networks based on personal affiliations and nepotism bias training programmes and their effect is negative. Hutchings and Weir (2006) noted that “wastah” is practised widely. The term “wastah” is used to describe a system of relations between people that is used to accomplish tasks or to secure advantages. Hutchings and Weir (2006) concede that more recently “wastah” has been used as the means by which government economic aid is secured. Arab countries rely on wastah and it is implicit in all important decision making processes. Hence, whilst it may appear that Western style T&D, recruitment and selection methods are being used, things are not always as they appear. It is more likely that decisions concerning the selection, recruitment and training of employees will be based on “wastah”. As a result, family and kin loyalties will always take priority over organisational goals (Branine, 2001). Branine (2002, p.141) made this clear when he pointed out that the bonds of “friendship and kinship” place managers under an obligation. As a result they give preferential treatment to family and friends rather than focusing on those who may be better qualified. Another effect revealed in a report by Harry (2007) is that in most of the GCC states, nationals are unwilling to make applications for work, because a formal
job application would effectively reveal that the person in question had no access to a powerful network of connections. “Wastah” distorts the situation because it creates problems and inefficiencies for the employment creation sector. Selection and recruitment processes are made difficult because there is insufficient information regarding potentially suitable candidates.

These problems have been reflected in empirical studies over many years. In a study of senior public managers in the Gulf, Al-Tawail (1985) reported that 60 per cent thought local training was inefficient and 73 per cent indicated that the impact of training on performance was marginal. Therefore these institutions have failed to realize any significant change in the attitudes and practices of Arab managers. Al-Tawail (1985) argued that the upgrading of training was inhibited by a number of challenges. These challenges included external constraints and internal deficiencies, such as over-emphasis on theory in curricula and insufficient training methods.

In attempt to address such problems, the Gulf states have in the last few decades invested heavily in HRD. Wilkins (2001a) contends that in the Gulf countries, whilst there is very little dependable data on expenditure rates for HRD, it is common knowledge that expenditure has increased over the past ten years. Wilkins (2001b) conducted a survey of large business organisations in the United Arab Emirates; he discovered that 73 per cent had a formal training and development strategy, 68 per cent employed a training manager, 73 per cent had a training centre, 38 per cent employed six or more full – time trainers and 67 per cent delivered management development programmes.

Wilkins (2001a) also revealed that Gulf organisations select nationals to be the recipients of their main management development activity. The majority of
organisations are not willing to provide T&D for expatriate employees. This is due to the fact that expatriates are expected to arrive with the requisite qualifications and there are high levels of labour turnover in the region. Consequently investment is not regarded as an effective use of resources.

Focusing specifically on Kuwait, Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) contend that Kuwaiti organisations regard HRD as a crucial means by which to secure the highly-qualified and trained workforce that is necessary to meet the challenges and changes in the state. Many administration development programmes are undertaken in both public and private sector Kuwaiti organisations in tandem with foreign and local expertise. Highly developed training techniques and advanced training materials that originate in the UK and the USA are applied in Kuwait. However, there are many difficulties and barriers confronting these development programmes. These include an inflated bureaucracy, and T&D programmes that are inept and inefficient. Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) found in their research regarding T&D practices that

- In terms of TNA there are no specific practices and processes for determining the training and education needs in all of the surveyed organisations.
- Newly made programmes and the availability of written material are very important factors which affect the programme selection
- Individual job position or specialisation, level of education and nationality are the most important factors for T&D selection.
- There are no specific follow-up procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of T&D programme in all of the organisations surveyed.
Al-Athari (2000) conducted a study that aimed to reveal the current T&D activity in government and private organisations in Kuwait and to investigate the factors that prevent organisations from using multimedia based training as a training delivery method. He found that most organisations in both sectors had a clear HRD strategy and they had established strong relations and a link between their human resource strategies and their overall organisational strategy and objectives. The majority of the organisations assessed the training needs of employees, but there was a lack of effective evaluation. The training delivery methods used were conventional and did not involve the trainees in the learning process. In addition, Al-Athari concluded that there is a set of factors which affect training in Kuwaiti organisations and could lead to success.

Al-Hamadi et al. (2007) found that most employees in Oman do not have job descriptions or career paths and there is no clear recognition of the importance of linking HRD to organisation objectives. Wilkins (2001a) cited as evidence of the perpetuation of traditional values that Arab candidates continued to respect the status and position of other workers (including those from different organisations) during the training programmes. It is very rare for an older and more senior manager to be challenged by a junior supervisor on a shared programme.

It might be concluded that Arab countries, unable to deal with the mounting pressures of globalisation, internationalisation, population growth and the expansion of information technology, were prompted to pay more careful attention to updating and improving their inadequate HRD systems. However, the current state of HRD is largely the result of the socio-cultural factors arising from Arab culture and its Islamic rules and principles. The previous sections have examined management practices in Arab
countries and they have identified the issues affecting these practices. The following section will examine HRD and its roles and functions in the context of Saudi Arabia.

### 3.5 HRD in the Saudi Context

Unlike many Arab countries, Saudi bureaucracy has undergone rapid growth due to the sudden increase in national wealth and the government’s ability to modernize and transform organisational, technical and human resources in a short time. As a cornerstone of economic growth HRD has become a major concern of Saudi policymakers. Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in building a competent national workforce capable of carrying out social and economic development programmes.

The total employment in the public sector in graded, professional and employee positions (exclusive of other employment categories, such as ordinary workers and direct recruits) increased from 105,548 in 1979 to 261,560 in 1988, and exceeded 899,700 employees by the end of 2008; 92 per cent are Saudi (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a). According to the Ninth Development Plan (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a), while on the one hand the number of non-Saudi workers reached five million in 2008 in the private sector, on the other hand, the entry of women into all professions is still limited. Employment opportunities for women remain limited to a few sectors such as education and healthcare. However, during recent years, there has been a wide and open public discussion of the status and role of women.

The government in Saudi Arabia sees HRD as the main mechanism for closing the skills gap and career development, but formal education in Saudi Arabia has been in place for a relatively short period in comparison to other countries in the region. Basic education stated in the 1920s, secondary education in early 1940s, in 1953, higher education
started, and vocational and technical education began in 1961. The indicators show a continued development in the education indicators, but a number of problems and challenges remain. One of the main problems is that higher education remains the preferred option of young Saudis compared with vocational and technical education, but the distribution of higher education students is overwhelmingly skewed towards the humanities (Madhi and Barrientos, 2003). Available statistics for 1995 show that 80 per cent of all graduates of local universities studied in the humanities, including art, education, sociology, religious studies and history (Madhi and Barrientos, 2003). These suggest that the education and training systems are not fully able to supply the economy with the range and quantity of skilled personnel it requires.

The government adopted comprehensive national planning as a model for human development. The major component of the national development plans (each plan lasts for five years), is building and strengthening institutional capabilities and human resource capabilities through education and training to create the manpower needed to develop the country.

The following sub-sections will review the experience of economic development. The HRD of the country will be examined from the early 1970s, when systematic socio-economic development planning was initiated, up to the present day. Issues relating the development of HR are more easily understood when considered in the context of national development plans. Then, the main institutions involved in HRD in the Kingdom will be introduced.
3.5.1 HRD under the Development Plans

3.5.1.1 HRD under the First Development Plan (1970-1975)

In the early stage of its development, Saudi Arabia enjoyed an abundance of capital but suffered from a shortage of manpower. Lack of manpower made the creation of labour-intensive industries extremely difficult. This plan took a particular interest in the development of human resources, with special emphasis on education, vocational training, and literacy programmes. During the period of the first development plan, the Saudi labour force grew by an estimated 3.8 per cent each year (Ministry of Planning, 1975, p. 21).

As highlighted in the second plan (Ministry of Planning, 1980, p. 15) the structure of employment underwent considerable changes during the first plan. The shift in employment from the agricultural sector to construction was a trend that became evident during the period of the plan. The agricultural share in employment declined from 40.4 per cent in 1970 to 28 per cent in 1975. The construction share in employment doubled to 20.6 per cent in 1970. There were three main features of the labour market during 1970-1975:

1. Low participation rate of Saudis in the labour force.
2. Low female participation in the labour force.
3. Excessive dependence on foreign labour.

3.5.1.2 HRD under the Second Development Plan (1975-1980)

The experience of the second development plan demonstrates that one of the factors that constrained the implementation of the government’s economic development was the
shortage of manpower. Therefore, this plan emphasised the importance of human resources, with particular attention given to education, training, and vocational training. 14.7 per cent of the expenditure was allocated to HRD.

3.5.1.3 HRD under the Third Development Plan (1980-1985)

During the third development plan, remarkable changes occurred in the occupational structure of employment. The most important development was the decline in agriculture and construction and the relative increase in services, trade and financial services. The agricultural share in employment declined from 18 per cent in 1980 to 13.9 per cent in 1985. In the construction sector, the share of employment declined from 21.1 per cent in 1980 to 19 per cent in 1985. In contrast, the manufacturing sector expanded its share of the workforce from 5.6 per cent in 1980 to 9.3 per cent in 1985.

Under this plan 18.4 per cent of the government’s development expenditure was allocated to HRD (Ministry of Planning, 1985, p. 31).

During the period 1980-1985 the excessive dependence on foreign labour continued. Despite the emphasis on Saudisation, the foreign labour force grew by 1.1 million while the share of Saudis in the labour force declined from 49.4 per cent to 40.2 per cent during the third plan. At the end of this plan the civilian labour force was 4,446,000, of whom 2,660,000 were non-Saudis, 1,648,200 Saudi men and 136,800 Saudi women (Ministry of Planning, 1985, p. 31).

3.5.1.4 HRD under the Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990)

The main feature of the economy during this period was the changing structure of the labour force with new Saudi entrants being directed to the private sector. The plan (1985-1990) stated that “all new employment will be in the private sector” (Ministry of
Planning, 1985, p. 84). A further key development during the fourth plan was the increased number of women entering the workforce. According to this plan, about fifty thousand women were expected to enter the workforce (Ministry of Planning, 1985, p. 52). Another key development during this period was the attention given to Saudisation. The government believed that the fourth plan would provide an opportunity to change the pattern of employment in the country. The primary objective of the plan was to reduce the number of non-Saudi workers from 2.66 to 2.06 million (Ministry of Planning, 1990, p. 51).

3.5.1.5 HRD under the Fifth Development Plan (1990-1995)

During this period the focus was on creating new jobs to meet the growing number of job seekers. Therefore the government took a number of measures to implement its Saudisation policy. These included as the main elements, the creation of a master plan for education and training, imposing more manpower control in public and private organisations, and providing financial incentives to increase the employment of Saudi women. During the fifth plan 574,800 Saudis were expected to enter the labour market. The plan also called for the creation of 35,400 jobs and the replacement of 220,400 foreign workers.

A key development during the fifth plan was an improvement in the quality of education. Another main factor during the fifth plan was an increase in the number of women entering the labour market. Sixty thousand women entered the labour market during the fifth plan (Ministry of Planning, 1995).
3.5.1.6 HRD under the Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000)

One of the principal objectives of the sixth plan was to achieve a high level of Saudisation. The private sector was expected to play the leading role in this process. As the sixth plan stated (Ministry of Planning, 1995, p. 173), “In conformity with the sixth plan strategy to replace non-Saudi workers with qualified Saudis and to encourage the private sector to generate more job opportunities for Saudis, around 95 per cent of the net growth in aggregate employment is expected to occur in the private sector.”

3.5.1.7 HRD under the Seventh Development Plan (2000-2005)

In order to retain the focus on Saudisation, the same principal objectives continued throughout the seventh plan. A key achievement was the establishment of many technical colleges, and the opening of more colleges for women. In this plan, allocations to human resources development amounted to SR 276.9 billion, or 56.7 per cent of the plan’s total investments (Ministry of Planning, 2001). This was done through education, training and international human resource development programmes (Ministry of Planning, 2000).

3.5.1.8 HRD under the Eighth Development Plan (2005-2009)

During the timescale of this plan the government made a substantial investment in HRD. It developed a national strategy to emphasize the development of skills aimed at reducing the great influx of foreign labour. Therefore, HRD was “a most important goal of the Eighth Development Plan (according to its general objective and fifth strategic pillar)” (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2005a, p. 35). During this plan, the allocation to HRD sector increased to about 464.1 billion Riyals, representing more than 75 per cent of total investment of the plan.
3.5.1.9 HRD under the Ninth Development Plan (2010-2014)

The Ninth Development Plan maintains the priorities of previous development plans to focus on HRD. It is planned, during this plan, to spend about 731.5 billion in this sector, or almost 50.6 per cent of total allocations of the development sectors (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010b).

The government is still committed to apportioning a large amount of its national budget to HRD. The total expenditure on HRD increased from about 45.5 billion Saudi Arabian riyals in 1998 to 121.943 billion in 2010, representing an increase of 91.6 percent. Table 3.1 shows the total government and HRD expenditure during the 2000-2010 period. The expenditure on HRD constitutes about twenty-five percent of the total government expenditure. In addition, the annual growth rate of HRD expenditure is 8.5 per cent, higher than the growth rate of the total government expenditure, which is 6.5 percent. Over the past seven years, thousands of schools and sixteen public universities have been established (until 2000, there were only seven public universities). Many private universities and colleges were also established during this time. In addition, an HRD fund was set up to assist the private sector to train and employ Saudi citizens.
Table 3.1: Total Government and Human Resources Development Expenditures
(Millions of Riyals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total Government Expenditures</th>
<th>HRD Expenditures</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>49,284</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>214,999</td>
<td>53,010</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>207,831</td>
<td>47,037</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>209,000</td>
<td>49,609</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>230,000</td>
<td>55,832</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>280,000</td>
<td>69,899</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>335,000</td>
<td>87,164</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>380,000</td>
<td>96,483</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>410,000</td>
<td>104,600</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>475,000</td>
<td>121,942</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>475,001</td>
<td>121,943</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,401,831</td>
<td>856,803</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Finance (2010)
One UK Pound = about 7 Saudi Riyals

3.5.2 Major Institutes Involved in HRD in the Kingdom

HRD has been a priority for successive development plans, which have sought to promote skills and develop capabilities through education, training and vocational training. In addition, these plans have focused on issues of labour – market efficiency and policies for improving the working environment in response to national and international development requirements (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010b).

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Civil Service, the General Organisation for Technical and Vocational Training, and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) are the major government agencies involved in HRD. A number of private institutions (including the Chambers of Commerce and
Industry) are also involved in this activity via a range of different development programmes. Within the context of HRD policies, two government agencies take on the responsibility of designing and implementing labour market policies and employment regulations: the Ministry of Labour which performs the role in the field of private sector employment and the Ministry of Civil Service to perform the role in the various fields of civil service. During the last few years there have been various achievements in the field of HRD development projects. These projects were designed to develop labour power, increase efficiency, and increase the supply of qualified workers that were necessary to fulfil the needs of the national economy and meet the challenges of globalization.

The following section sheds light on the main institutions involved in developing the human resources in public sector organisations. These are the Ministry of Civil Service and the Institute of Public Administration.

3.5.2.1 Ministry of Civil Service

The Ministry of Civil Service was established in 2000 in order to carry out the duties of the General Civil Service Bureau. It is responsible for supervision of civil service in the public sector organisations in the Kingdom. It is an executive and control body that undertakes the processes of recruiting labour, being a central agency of employment and promotion of all public service employees (AL-Humaid, 2001).

The Committee for Training and Scholarship of Civil Service Employees is part of the Ministry of Civil Service. The Committee consisted of the Minister of Civil Service (serving as the Committee President), with the membership including the Director –
General of the Institute of Public Administration and the Governor of Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and Deputy – ministers of various ministries.

The Committee for Training and Scholarship of Civil Service Employees is concerned with all types of training and the various requirements and stages of scholarship inside and outside the Kingdom. It plays an important role in the planning of training policies and setting rules that organize training. It also creates an annual plan for training inside the Kingdom, based on plans presented by public sector organisations.

3.5.2.2 The Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

The government established the IPA in 1961, as a result of the rapid increase of public sector organisations and number of public employees and following the recommendation of the United Nations experts. The purpose of the IPA is to promote the efficiency of civil servants and prepare them academically and practically to carry out their responsibilities, to use their authority in a way that ensures a high level of administration, and to support the bases for developing the national economy. The IPA also participates in the administrative reorganisation of government agencies, and offers advice on administrative problems referred to it by public organisations. In addition, it conducts research projects related to administration, and cements cultural relationships in the field of public administration (IPA, 2008).

The IPA training activities consist of in-service training programmes which are directed towards public sector employees while they are in service in order to meet their training needs, raise their productivity and supply them with the knowledge, skills and positive attitudes necessary. This type of training offers different kinds of programmes such as administration, finance, economics, computing, office management, and others. The
number of employees who attended these programmes during the year 2008 reached 50,000 (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2009).

Also, the IPA provides general preparatory programmes (pre-service) for university and high-school level graduates to prepare them for professional roles in both the public and private sectors. These programmes include a variety of specializations, such as hospital administration, executive secretary, computing, marketing, and others. The duration of these programmes ranges from 1 to 2 years. The number of graduates of this type of training reached 1,300 during 2008 (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2009).

In addition to the above types of training activities, the IPA provides training programmes that aim at raising the abilities of employees in higher administrative positions in public and private sectors. These programmes use different methods such as applied workshops, symposiums, meeting and seminars. The number of participants who attended these activities reached 501,400 between 1969 and 2008 (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2009).

The IPA is applying modern concepts and methods in designing its management training programmes. Atiyyah (1992) described the IPA as one of the best equipped and staffed of the major 18 public training institutions in Arab countries. Obtaining the funds necessary to expand and improve its operations has been relatively easy. Its annual budget increased from 1.3 million Saudi riyals in 1961 to SR 447,975,000 in 2010 (US$=3.75 SR).

The number of IPA staff rose from seven in 1961 to 1258 of whom more than 80 per cent are faculty staff members. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of IPA staff according to the type of profession by the end of 2008.
Attiyah (1992) reported that although the IPA faculty staff are well informed about modern management concepts and practices, they lack experience in public service, which leads them to focus on theoretical concepts.

### 3.6 HRD Policy and Strategy in the Public Sector

The HRD policy in the public sector, as determined by the Ministry of Civil Service, aims at achieving the following objectives (Al-Shakawy, 1995):

1. Preparing the employee to fill or take over a vacant position, or a position occupied by a non-Saudi, where such position needs special training or preparation.

2. Increasing the employees’ productivity, or enhancing and developing the administrative environment of public organisations, through improving their work approaches.

3. Preparing public employees to use new approaches and modern technology in their work.

4. Retraining or preparing those who will be transferred to new departments, due to organisational interests or to the employees’ circumstances.

Among the most prominent rules stated by the committee to regulate training activities are that every public organisation should annually train at least 5 per cent of its employees (Al-Shakawy, 1995). Also, the Civil service regulated that employee training is a work duty that is may be done during or outside working time; and all public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Saudi</th>
<th>Non-Saudi</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty staff member</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians and workers</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>937</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>1258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPA (2008, p.13)
organisations must enable their employees to get training in their specialisms. Moreover, the Civil Service system grants the right of leave from work for training purposes. It states that:

“...governmental agencies should enable their employees to receive training in their respective specialties, and should grant them leave from work to join training programmes that require that at the recommendation of the training body” (Al-Hamoud, 1995, p.260).

In 1990, the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform decreed that all government agencies must establish within their structure a department of organisation development in order to improve performance and to be responsible for T&D in these agencies. This resolution recommendrd that these departments report to the top management. It also outlined the T&D responsibilities of these departments as follows:

1. To discuss and identify the employees’ training needs in the organisation with the concerned organisation, in all fields;

2. To suggest plans and programmes regarding T&D opportunities for employees in the organisation in all fields in accordance with the related regulations and actual training needs, and to follow up the implementation of these plans and programmes.

3. To collect application forms concerned with nomination and submit them to the training centres; to follow up the employees during training sessions; send

2 Higher Committee for Administrative Reform resolution No. 192. “main responsibilities”
regular reports to the employees’ managers; inform the top management about the outcomes of training programmes.

4. To be responsible for all required procedures for employees’ scholarships.

In 2005, the Saudi government reported a long-term strategy inspired by a vision of the future. The vision of the future of the human resources may be summarized, as it is stated in the long-term strategy, as follows:

“By 2024, the Saudi economy will be a developed, thriving and prosperous economy based on sustainable foundations. It will extend rewarding work opportunities to all citizens, will have a high quality education and training system, excellent health care for all, and will provide all the necessary services to ensure the welfare of all citizens, while safeguarding social and religious values and preserving the national heritage” (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2005b, p.8-9).

The vision of the Saudi government emphasized the economic progress and human resource development. The government stressed as Achoi (2009) described that both economic progress and HRD “are two sides of the same coin” (p.37). Also, the vision stressed that investing in HRD means raising the technical and managerial and innovative competencies of human resources through the learning process.

3.7 Factors that Shaped HRD in Saudi Arabia

Five factors have shaped HRM policies and practices in Saudi Arabia. Mellahi and Wood (2001) identify these factors as the structure of the country’s economy, the political environment, the national culture, HRD strategy and the labour market. Although the Saudi government adopts a free market economy, the government still controls the economic policies and activities (Mellahi, 2006). In the 1990s, the government introduced legislation requiring organisations to employ Saudis wherever possible. In addition, companies must increase the number of nationals employed by 5%
a year or face sanctions. The reason why many companies employ a large number of foreign workers is because national workers are very much more expensive to hire; 85% of foreign workers are paid less than what a local would accept as a basic salary (Mellahi and Wood, 2001).

Islamic laws and values influence management practices in Saudi Arabia. The influence of Islam can be recognized in three areas: the employment of women, management style and HRM practices and policies (Mellahi and Wood, 2001). The female population in Saudi has one of the lowest rates of labour participation in the world. Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in HRD in order to fill the shortfall in qualified people. Atiyyah (1999) points out that in Saudi Arabian organisations, managers rely heavily on their social leadership skills to deal with the work.

In the public sector the HRM model is characterized by “lifetime employment, seniority wages, and social cohesiveness rather than competence” (Mellahi and Wood, 2001, p: 146). Mellahi and Wood (2001) argue that tribal ties and friendship are considered more important than the organisational system. Nepotism (wastah) plays a major role in the public sector, by providing jobs through connections. In the private sector, HRM is still in an early stage of development. There is no law to regulate working hours, minimum wage, job security and hiring and firing. Mellahi (2006) argues that the policies and practices of HRM in Saudi Arabia raise some ethical issues. Firstly, foreign workers in small and medium private companies work in an unsafe and substandard environment. Secondly, work assignments and rewards depend on the country of origin. Thirdly, employees are not allowed to form any associations in order to defend their rights.
3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has established the context for the present study. It has drawn attention to the factors that influence management practices in Arab organisations, and it has highlighted specific features of HRD in the context of the Gulf, with particular reference to the evolution of HRD in Saudi Arabia.

It has been shown that, throughout the region, attention to HRD has been stimulated by the need for a qualified workforce to achieve socioeconomic development. HRD practices are, however, influenced by a number of cultural and environmental factors. Certain factors are particularly evident, for example, a focus on social relationships and ties of obligation, rather than on performance, and a tendency to be risk averse and reactive. These distinctive features of Arab-Islamic culture raise questions as to the applicability of Western management techniques and theories.

Studies of HRD in the Arab world reveal that there is a lack of effective needs assessment, a tendency to treat training as a stand-alone feature that is separate from organisational strategy, and inadequate evaluation of training. Recently, organisations in the Gulf States have paid more attention to HRD based on Western models, but these programmes have mainly targeted nationals.

In Saudi Arabia, HRD can be seen to have evolved through several phases, each with different emphases and priorities as dictated by the requirements of successive development plans. Some of the key features of this transition include the shift from agriculture to construction, manufacturing and, more recently, services; the expansion and upgrading of education; the increased role of the private sector; and an increase (albeit still small and slow) in opportunities for women. This chapter completes the
theoretical foundation for the research. In the following chapter, the empirical methods adopted to gather the primary data in relation to the research questions will be explained and justified.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the research methodology used in conducting this research. The importance of methodology cannot be over-emphasised because it provides the road map through which the required data will be collected. The methodology used will determine the type of data that the researcher will end up with. The nature and the context of the research questions and research objectives will determine the specific research methodology to be followed (Bell, 1987; Saunders et al., 2009). The aim of this chapter is to present the methodology used in investigating the nature of HRD in public organisations in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter will not only explain to the reader the methodology employed but will also identify the philosophical basis of the research and examine the rationale behind the choice of approach to the fieldwork. The chapter will begin by outlining the research design. Thereafter, it will explain and to justify the mixed methods approach taken in this study. It will then proceed to explain the research approaches, data collection methods and sampling procedures. Issues relating to validity and reliability will be discussed. The chapter concludes with insights into some of the issues that the researcher encountered in the processes of data collection and analysis.

4.2 Research Design

Bryman (2001) defines the research design as “an overall structure and orientation of an investigation and the structure provides a framework within which data are collected and analysed” (p.29). The benefit of the research design is that it “guides the
investigator in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting” (Nachmias and Nachmias 1996, p.97).

All research designs have specific strengths and weaknesses. The nature of the study will determine which particular research design is appropriate. Bryman (2001) identified five main research designs: experimental design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design, and comparative design.

In this study, bearing in mind time and financial constraints, a cross-sectional design was used for data collection, as this design enabled the required data to be collected within the available time and funds. Moreover, a cross-sectional design is most appropriate to the purpose of this research, as it provides a snap-shot of the situation at a particular time and place. However, in order to appreciate how this design was implemented, it is necessary first to consider the paradigm or philosophy guiding the research.

4.3 The Research Paradigm and Approach

The term paradigm is used to refer to the “framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge” (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 55). Therefore, research paradigms offer an insight into the different perspectives on how knowledge is generated. They provide a framework comprising an accepted set of theories, methods and ways of collecting data (Collis and Hussey, 2009). The basic beliefs about the world affect the way research is designed, and how data is collected and analysed. There are two main research paradigms or philosophies. These are the positivistic paradigm and the phenomenological paradigm. Some authors use different terms, of which the
most common are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative refers to the positivistic paradigm while qualitative refers to the phenomenological paradigm (Collis and Hussey, 2009). However, there is also a third, mixed approach; the following discussion justifies the decision to use such an approach in this research.

Considering the research questions and objectives of this study, mixed methods were thought to be most suitable for generating the data required to address the research questions. The two techniques employed in collecting data were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The questionnaires provided quantitative data from the people responsible for HRD or employees’ T&D in the Saudi public organisations about their current practices and context, whereas qualitative data, obtained through interviews, was needed to understand the thinking underlying these practices and the related concerns and challenges, as perceived by those most involved. Both techniques were employed because it was felt that a questionnaire alone would not fulfil all the research objectives and, accordingly, interviews were employed to generate more in-depth data that would address the research questions. Qualitative research goes beyond measuring the observable behaviour, the ‘what’, and seeks to understand the meaning and beliefs underlying action, the ‘why and how’ (Marschan-Piekkari and Welch, 2004, p. 8).

There are several reasons that made the mixed method most suitable for this research. First, the research was conducted in the context of the Saudi Arabian public organisations. It explored the concept of HRD and the practices of HRD in terms of TNA, delivery methods and evaluation. In addition it sought to identify the strategic role of HRD and identify the problems and challenges that might confront HRD
function and programmes. Thus, some of the data required was in the form of objective facts, often of a quantitative nature, about practice—for example budgets, numbers of employees, time-scales, reporting structures and the like, which could best be obtained through questionnaires and through review of relevant documents.

At the same time, the research questions and objectives have a descriptive, exploratory and interpretive dimension and elements of the investigation were based on HRD/T&D managers’ perceptions in the context of the Saudi Arabian public organisations such as their view of HRD and perceptions of related benefits and difficulties. This required data collection methods that would generate a rich wealth of data and interpretation, such as in-depth interview. Moreover, it is noteworthy that most of the studies conducted on HRD in both developing (e.g. Haslinda and Hiok, 2009; Weir et al., 2006) and developed countries (e.g. McCracken and Wallace, 2000) have applied mixed methods. Therefore, the adoption of a similar approach in this study enabled the researcher to draw on their experience, adding to the validity of the research and also facilitated comparison. As a matter of fact, this approach has been used by other Arab researchers who have conducted studies in the field of HRD in different contexts in Arab countries (for example Al-Ali, 1999; Agnaia, 1996 and Altarawneh, 2005). These Arab researchers found a combination of questionnaires and interviews to be the most suitable and appropriate research methods in collecting data in Arab countries.

A further argument in support of mixed method is that the confidence in the findings can be enhanced by the possibility of cross-checking information obtained from complementary sources (Punch, 1998). Similarly, May (2001) agrees that combining both methods into a single study can be highly productive. With regard to HRM
research as an area of business and management studies, Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 77) wrote:

“It is not unusual in business research to take a mixture of approaches, particularly in the methods of collecting and analysing data... it is perfectly possible and even advantageous, to use both qualitative and quantitative method in business research... survey researchers have often noted the potential value of combining their work with interviews”.

Above all, this approach allowed the researcher to obtain wider insights and deeper understanding about HRD in Saudi Arabia than a single method would do. By using both approaches (qualitative and quantitative), the researcher was able to gather data about what people do and also to explore peoples’ reactions and feelings. It gives the researcher, as suggested by Kirk and Miller (1986) the ability to interact with the participant in their own organisations, and in their own language and their own terms. The way the methods were combined for the purposes of the study is illustrated in the research design below.
However, it should be pointed out that the two methods were not employed in equal proportion. This study relies more on the data generated from the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires complement this by generating some basic data in standardized form, but it is the semi-structured interviews that gave the participants the opportunity to offer in-depth explanation on their understanding of HRD in Saudi public organisations. The questionnaires provided clues and the semi-structured interviews offers in-depth explanation. That is not in any way to suggest that the questionnaires were not useful, but a greater weight in this study was given to the interviews. The following sections will examine in detail the nature of questionnaires and semi-
structured interviews, their respective strengths and shortcomings, and the way they were employed in this study.

4.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are judged to be the most frequently used method of data collection and they are one of the most useful tools for gathering survey information. Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that a generic definition of questionnaires would include all methods of data collection in which each respondent is required to answer an identical, predetermined range of questions whether completed by the informants and returned to the researcher or administered by an interviewer.

According to Saunders et al. (2009), questionnaires can be self - administered or interviewer administered. Self administered questionnaires are usually completed by respondents. Such questionnaires could be delivered and returned after completion by post, on line by e-mail or delivered personally by hand to each respondent and collected later. By comparison, interviewer-administered questionnaires refer to telephone interviews in which the questionnaires are administered over the telephone and also structured interviews in which structured questions are asked face to face.

Like many other data collection methods, the questionnaire has its own advantages and disadvantages. The questionnaire can be distributed to large a number of respondents quickly and economically, because it is based on a representative sample of a much larger population. This is its major advantage as an information gathering technique. Moreover, questionnaires can be relatively cheap and fast technique in terms of data collection from a large number of respondents who are dispersed over a wide geographical area, compared to personal interviews in the qualitative method. One
advantage over interviews is that respondents may be hesitant to express their views on controversial or sensitive issues in a face-to-face interview but they may be willing to answer anonymous questionnaires on such topics and this is a further advantage of this method (Oppenheim 1992). Questionnaires, moreover, allow advanced statistical analysis of the collected standardised data, allowing easy comparison and understanding.

On the other hand, questionnaires have many disadvantages: a good and well structured questionnaire is not necessarily easy to design and develop. Likewise, response rates are often low and biases can stem from this. This method is also unsuitable for less well-educated respondents, who may have difficulty understanding the questions. Questionnaires do not offer an opportunity to address any misunderstandings that might arise and they do not give the researcher the chance to ask more in-depth questions or to offer help in explaining the questionnaire. The researcher is independent from the completion process; therefore he/she cannot do anything about incomplete responses (Saunders et al., 2009; Collis and Hussey, 2009; and Bryman and Bell, 2003).

For the purpose of this research, however, the disadvantages were outweighed by the advantages, especially as the questionnaire was not the only instrument. As the questionnaire is a highly structured data collection technique, it was used in this research as an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample. The following sub-sections will discuss the questionnaire design and administration.

4.4.1 Questionnaire Design

The research questionnaires were formulated and designed with the aim of answering the research questions and objectives. The questionnaire was designed after reviewing
the previous studies and literature on HRD, definitions of HRD, HRD micro and macro activities, issues and challenges in HRD and HRD practices in developing countries. It was decided that using previous questionnaires, while making some necessary modifications to be applicable to the Saudi context would enhance the reliability and validity of the study, at the same time enabling comparison of these findings with other similar studies.

Consequently, some items were borrowed or adapted from questionnaires used by Altarawneh (2005), McCracken and Wallace (2000), Lee (1996), AKuratiyagmage (2003), and Al-Ali (1999). In addition, the researcher has spent more than twenty years in the Saudi public sector in HRD area as a trainer and external and internal organisational development consultant for public organisations. He drew on this personal experience of the Saudi public sector and HRD issues in developing or adapting some of the survey questions (Appendix A shows the copy of the questionnaire).

In constructing the questionnaire, careful attention was paid to the language, particularly wording, and to develop clear unambiguous questions (de Vaus, 1991; Bryman and Bell, 2003). Moreover, attention was given to the order of the questions in an attempt to ensure a good logical flow (de Vaus, 1991). The majority of questions took the form of closed-ended questions because they are easy and quick to complete, as they require no writing by respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The option “any other” was used in the appropriate instances to increase flexibility in the answer categories. A few open-ended questions were also asked in order to give opportunity to respondents to express ideas in their own words. Questions were printed on one side of the page only, because it is easy for people to miss questions on the back of the page. The questionnaires were
printed in green, the colour of the Saudi national flag, in order to attract the attention of HRD/T&D managers whose desks may be filled with other paperwork. The assumption was that a coloured questionnaire would stand out and be easily distinguishable from other documents.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections, as follows.

Section A gathered data concerning the types of organisation, the number of employees in the organisation, whether the organisation had a separate department/unit for HRD, and if not, who was responsible for the HRD or T&D function in the organisation. Also, there were questions regarding the number and qualifications of staff working in the department.

The purpose of section B of the questionnaire was to examine how HRD is practised in the Saudi public sector. Some questions in this section were adapted from Altarawneh (2005) and Akuratiyagmage (2003), and others developed from the literature review. This section was divided into five parts. Part I dealt with the training and development needs analysis. The respondents were asked whether they conducted any needs analysis in their organisations. If they answered no, they were asked an open-ended question to give reasons why need analysis was not conducted. If the respondents answered yes, need analysis was conducted, they were asked questions about the frequency of need analysis, and the approach and methods used for analysing needs. Part II included questions regarding training methods used when providing T&D programmes, and also the location where the training was carried out. If the organisation sent its employees to train outside Saudi Arabia, the respondents were asked about the main reasons for this. In part III, the respondents were asked whether their organisation evaluated its training
and development programmes. If respondents answered yes, then they were asked to indicate what methods they were using. If their answer was no, then they were asked to indicate reasons for not carrying out such evaluation. Part IV requested information on performance management. Respondents were asked to give their opinions on a number of statements, using a five point Likert scale. Part V requested information on budget and expenditure on HRD activities. It also asked whether the budget for the current year was higher, the same or lower compared with the previous year’s budget.

Section C of the questionnaire was intended to obtain information that would allow evaluation of whether or not and to what extent HRD is strategic in Saudi public organisations. Questions in this section were adapted from McCracken and Wallace (2000). These authors gave the researcher permission to use their questionnaires and modify them within the domain of this study (see Appendix B). The researcher adapted the instrument to meet the aim of the study and to suit the Saudi context. Also, some questions were adapted from Altarawneh (2005). This section required the respondents to indicate their agreement with a series of statements on a five–point rating scale.

Section D of the questionnaire addressed the issues and challenges facing HRD practitioners in implementing HRD programmes effectively. The questions in this section were based on the literature and the researcher’s experience. The respondents were asked about their agreement with the statements given, using a five point Likert scale.

Finally, section E gathered background and demographic information on the respondents, such as their present job, age, and education level. This last section also
included an open-ended question to allow respondents to give any additional comments and suggestions which they thought would be useful and relevant to HRD.

4.4.2 Covering Letter

A covering letter accompanied the questionnaires, explaining the objective of the questionnaire and asking for the cooperation of the respondents. In line with Kane’s (1991) suggestions, the covering letter explained the purpose of the research, its sponsorship, how the respondents were selected, an appeal for cooperation, an assurance of confidentiality, and directions for completing the questionnaire. The participants were also asked to tick a box at the end of the questionnaire if they would like to have a copy of the study when it is ready.

It was made clear to them that the information they gave would only be used for the purpose of the study and no one would have access to the information but the researcher. Also included were contact details (telephone numbers and the postal address) just in case the respondents needed further clarification from the researcher or his supervisor. This was aimed at increasing the validity of the findings.

4.4.3 Translation of the Questionnaire

When the questionnaire was ready, it was translated from English into Arabic, because the intended participants of this study were native Arabic speakers. Translation of an instrument is a very important step. According to Bulmer and Warwick (1993), great care must be taken in translating a questionnaire from one language into another in order to ensure that the translation does not alter its concepts and meaning. They suggested a technique which they called “back–translation” (152). They explained the technique thus:
“The interview schedule [The questionnaire is] translated from the original language to the local language. It is then translated independently by another translator, back from the local language into the original language. The results are then compared [with the original] version to identify and correct semantic errors in translation” (152).

The researcher benefited from the expert translators working in the translation department in the Institute of Public Administration where the researcher works (see Appendix B). Also, the researcher gave the questionnaire to two academicians in HRM, one from King Saud University and the other from the Institute of Public Administration. They were asked to review the questionnaire and provide the researcher with their opinions and suggestions.

4.4.4 Piloting the Questionnaire

It is essential that questionnaires are piloted or tested before distribution (Collis and Hussey, 2009). This is a stage where the questionnaire is tried out on a small number of people who are similar to those in the target population. Around half a dozen or so should be enough to reveal any problems with the questionnaire (Hall and Hall, 1996). The main aim is to identify any unexpected problems with the questionnaire before the researcher commits her/his time and effort to the fieldwork proper (Kane, 1991). Piloting has a role in ensuring that the research questionnaire as a whole functions well (Foddy, 1993).

According to Oppenheim (1992), the main purpose of conducting a pilot trial is to find ways of improving the questionnaire’s validity, reliability and administration. Therefore, piloting the questionnaire is important, even if time is limited, because the researcher will become aware of any shortcomings. The responses and comments that researchers obtain from piloting will help them to know if the questionnaire were understandable and clear, as well as provide them with an approximate time required to
respond to the questions (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Piloting helps the researcher consider how well the questions flow and whether it is necessary to move some of them to improve this feature. It also helps in identifying problems of missing data or poorly worded instructions (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

When the draft questionnaire was completed, it was given to the supervisor to assess if the questionnaire covered the needed areas to provide answers to all the research questions. The researcher received constructive feedback on how to make the questionnaire clear and attractive to complete. In the second stage of piloting the questionnaire, copies were distributed to selected staff and PhD students in the field of HRM in Hull University and some other UK universities. They were asked to give their comments as to whether the questionnaire was clear and easy to understand; whether it was easy to answer; what they thought about the layout, wording and length; and finally, whether they had any suggestions or recommendations on how to improve the questionnaire (see Appendix B). At this stage a significant change was made. In relation to section C of the questionnaire (Appendix A), Dr Stephen Swailes (CMOL) made the useful suggestion that the key terms on strategic HRD should be defined to ensure that respondents understood the issues being asked. Consequently, the terms Strategy, Policy and Plan were defined prior to the questions involving these terms.

The third stage of piloting the questionnaire took place after completing the translation from English to Arabic. Copies were distributed to five academics specialising in Human Resource Management, three from the Institute of Public Administration and two from King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. A letter accompanied the questionnaires explaining the objectives of the study and asking for their feedback about the content of the questionnaire.
During the fourth stage of piloting of the Arabic version, copies were distributed to 10 Saudi HRD/T&D managers in order to find out whether items were ambiguous or difficult to understand. It was also enquired whether the questionnaire would provide the needed information, and whether the questions were appropriate for the people who were to be surveyed and also whether the pilot respondents had any further comments or suggestions. The other reasons for conducting this stage of piloting included trialling the procedures for distribution to see how long the questionnaire took to answer; to check the analysis procedures and to ensure that the questionnaire produced useful information. The researcher also benefited from this stage of piloting to generate fixed options to open questions. For example, for Question 19 of Appendix A, originally there was an open question to give reasons why organisations sent employees abroad for training. As a result of the comments made by the pilot study respondents, a decision was made to generate several closed questions, from which the respondents would select. This was done for the convenience of the respondents, to encourage them to answer this question. The questionnaire was shown to the research supervisor for his comments after each stage. This final version of the questionnaire is in Appendix A.

4.4.5 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Validity and reliability are very important and the success of any survey depends on them. Validity is concerned with whether the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. On the other hand, reliability of a measurement refers to the consistency or stability of the measurement (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). In this study, many procedures were taken before, during and after collecting the data, to ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire. This section discusses some of the issues relating to reliability and validity and measures taken to ensure that reliability and validity were
achieved. However, some specific procedures taken to address reliability and validity are described and discussed in this chapter.

4.4.5.1 Reliability

From a quantitative perspective, reliability of a measure is an indication of the stability and consistency of the instrument. It is primarily “a matter of stability: if an instrument is administered to the same individual on two different occasions, the question is, will it yield the same result?” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, p.135). In the case of this study, this would concern the reliability of the structured questionnaire.

Two approaches commonly used to address the reliability of a structured questionnaire are the ‘test-retest’ method and the measurement of the internal scale reliability using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient as the criteria parameter. The test-retest method involves repeating the study using the same questionnaire. For practical reasons, this approach was not possible for this study. Consequently, this study adopted the measurement of the internal consistency of the scale method using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, as described in the next four paragraphs.

Not all questions in the structured questionnaire were aimed at collecting information on concepts. Some of the questions collected descriptive and demographic information. As a result, only those questions that involved concepts had their Cronbach’s alpha calculated using SPSS. Cronbach’s alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 1 perfect and that of zero showing no reliability whatsoever. According to Field (2009, p. 675), the ideal or generally acceptable “cut-off point” is a Cronbach alpha of 0.7, although for exploratory studies, the cut-off point can be as low as 0.6. However,
Pallant (2009) pointed out if the number of items in the scale is fewer than ten, it is common to find quite low Cronbach values (e.g. 5).

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the relevant scales used in the structured questionnaire were as follows. The seven items used in determination and analysis of employees’ training and development needs had a Cronbach coefficient of 0.83. The scale for needs assessment had a Cronbach coefficient of 0.93 (from 7 items). The issues relating to when training is provided produced a Cronbach coefficient of 0.84 based on 10 items. Training methods used had a Cronbach coefficient of 0.84 (based on 3 items). Frequency of on-the-job-training produced a Cronbach coefficient of 0.73 (based on 4 items). With regard to the training and development evaluation concept, the evaluation of training programmes produced a Cronbach coefficient of 0.79 (based on 4 items), while the methods used in training has a Cronbach coefficient of 0.56 (from 5 items). For the performance management concept, the Cronbach coefficient was 0.78 (based on 5 items). For strategic HRD, the Cronbach alpha coefficient based on 21 items produced a Cronbach coefficient of 0.87. Finally, with regard to issues and challenges facing HRD, the Cronbach coefficient was 0.83 (based on 15 items).

The above Cronbach coefficients clearly show that with the exception of the methods used in training, which had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.56, the rest of the concepts were reliably measured because the Cronbach coefficients were higher than 0.7, with most of them being in the 0.8 to 0.9 range, which are very good and excellent results. In the case of the one scale with a comparatively low value, this can be attributed to the small number of items in the scale (5 items). In the case of the one scale with a comparatively low value, this can be attributed to the small number of items in the scale (5 items), consistent with Pallant’s (2009) observation, cited earlier. Hence we
can conclude that with regard to the structured questionnaire, the reliability issues were adequately addressed.

4.4.5.2 Validity

Validity was pursued through several procedures.

- Using different data collection methods in this study helped to ensure that data are really about what they appear to be about (Saunders et al., 2009). Many questions were asked in both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in order to ensure that findings resulting from one method were validated by the findings from the other method.

- Sekaran (2003) asserts the need to use well-validated measures to ensure that the research is scientific. She goes on to assert the importance of making use of already developed measures and scales, since their validity has been established by their developers. In this study, many items and scales were adopted from several previous studies, which helped to meet the requirement of validity in line with Sekaran’s (2003) suggestions.

- The extensive piloting procedures described in the previous section allowed ambiguity in the questions to be identified and corrected and enabled the content and face validity of the questionnaire to be judged.

As mentioned earlier, most of the validity issues are specifically addressed in the relevant chapter of this thesis, which demonstrate the measures taken in the collection of data (structured questionnaire or interviews), and how the data were analysed and interpreted. Examples include the way the researcher addressed potential flaws in
validity due to issues such as response bias (failure by interviewee to reveal all the relevant information on certain issues, whatever the reason), which will result in a corresponding failure by the researcher to obtain a true picture of the phenomenon. The detailed description provided showing how the researcher conducted the field work and the data analysis clearly demonstrate that the validity issues were strongly addressed. Operational measures were carefully conducted. Ethical rules as suggested by the literature were followed.

4.4.6 Target Population and Sample

According to Sekaran (2003) the research population is the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to research. In this study the population was defined as all the Saudi public sector organisations. The reason behind targeting the public sector in Saudi Arabia as the subject of this research was because of the important roles the public sector plays in the Saudi economy. The public sector in Saudi Arabia includes many categories. The first category is the ministries. The second category includes councils, presidencies and bureaus, which are mostly autonomous with separate budgets, and report directly to the President of the Council of Ministers. The third category is the local government organisations (emirates and municipalities). The fourth category is independent departments and public agencies, which are found in almost all economic fields (commerce, industry, agriculture, finance, and service). The fifth category is the public universities and training institutions. The sixth category is the commissions. These public organisations implement the Civil Service System. The researcher approached the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform and asked them for a list of all the public sector organisations that are independent and have a separate budget from the Ministry of Finance. They provided the researcher with an up-
to-date list (see Appendix B) which included 158 public organisations, including all ministries (22), 18 presidencies, councils and bureaus, 26 local government organisations (emirates and municipalities), 50 independent departments and public agencies, 27 public universities and training institutions and 15 commissions, as illustrated in Table 4.1. Since the number was relatively small, it was decided to conduct a census of the whole population rather than surveying a sample of the population, in order to reflect the whole picture of HRD in the Saudi public organisations.

Table 4.1: The Population of the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministries</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidency/Council/ Bureau</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Agency and Independent Departments</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/Training/Res. Agencies</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These organisations were targeted to be the population of this study, regardless of their size or the number of their employees, to investigate the concept, practices and strategy of HRD in all the Saudi public sectors.

In this research, the whole population was targeted for many reasons. First, the population was relatively small. Second, gathering information from the entire population allows clear generalizations to be made. In this context, Saunders et al. (2009) point out that the error in generalising is lower in larger samples or censuses of the whole population. Therefore, the whole population, which included 158 public organisations identified by the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform in March 2008, was targeted as the sample for this study.
This research was conducted in the headquarters of these public organisations, with all the managers responsible for HRD or T&D departments. Those practitioners were chosen to participate in this study because of their role, which means they would be likely to have the required information about and an understanding of HRD issues, plans, challenges and its importance for the organisation. The headquarters of public organisations were chosen because most of these headquarters had an HRD or T&D department or unit. However, most of the branches of the Saudi public organisations did not have HRD/T&D departments or units and if they had, they were very small, with few employees. In addition, those who were working in the headquarters were involved in HRD policies, practices and planning. Moreover, decisions related to the development of HR in public organisations are centralized.

4.4.7 Survey Administration

The field work was conducted from mid-March 2008 to mid-July 2008. Upon arrival in Riyadh, the researcher met His Excellency the General Director of the Institute of Public Administration, the sponsor of the PhD programme. The aim was to provide a brief summary of the study, its aims and objectives, and to ask for his support during the stage of fieldwork in Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, His Excellency, being an intellectual himself, was interested and gave assurances of his full support and help.

Before administering the questionnaire, a letter was obtained from the researcher’s sponsorship body (the Institute of Public Administration) encouraging respondents to co-operate with the researcher. In addition, a letter from the researcher’s supervisor urging the participants to co-operate with the researcher was attached (see Appendix B).
After the questionnaire was completed and piloted, the researcher moved to the final stage which is called administering the questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2009). This stage is very important and critical in the research process. Keeping in mind that managers are increasingly being “bombarded with requests to respond to questionnaires and so may be unwilling to answer questionnaire” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 395), maximising responses depends on the way the researcher administers his or her questionnaire.

There are four main methods of questionnaire administration: face to face, mail, e-mail and telephone. These four methods have advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses (de Vaus, 1991 and Saunders et al., 2009). In this study, two methods were used. First, the majority of the questionnaires, which were addressed to organisations in Riyadh, were personally distributed. Most of the public organisations’ headquarters are located in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. It was not difficult to find HRD/T&D managers, as there is only one HRD/T&D manager in the headquarters of each public organisation. Therefore, at each visit, effort was made to meet those managers personally in order to hand over the questionnaire. This was preceded by a preamble to the research and the researcher’s own background, and how important the participants’ information would be to the research. Also, a deadline for completing the questionnaire was agreed with the participant. Participants were given contact details to enable them to contact the researcher when the questionnaire was ready for collection; if they preferred it was personally collected. Otherwise, they were given the option of returning it by post, using the self-addressed envelopes and postage enclosed. Second, for those organisations located outside Riyadh, the questionnaires were distributed by post and self-addressed envelopes and postage were enclosed for their return.
The questionnaires were directed to the HRD manager or the person responsible for T&D. The Department of Admission and Registration at the Institute of Public Administration supplied an up to date list of the names and phone numbers of each person in the Saudi public organisations who is in charge of HRD or T&D activities. The researcher applied the following advice of Kane (1991) when using the postal questionnaire:

1. Using a follow-up strategy. That means a reminder was sent two weeks after the first mailing to respondents who had not yet replied and a phone call was made to those to whom the questionnaire was hand-delivered to their offices. Therefore, a record of returns was used.

2. After allowing time (around 15 days) for a response, a second follow-up of another reminder letter was sent out, together with another copy of the questionnaire and a return envelope.

3. After another ten days, a phone call was made to all who had not responded by that time.

4. A letter thanks was sent to those who responded.

When collecting the questionnaire, wherever possible the researcher met the participants who had completed the questionnaire and he usually had the opportunity to have another conversation about the questionnaire contents and obtain respondents’ comments or suggestions. Some participants, after they had completed the questionnaire, offered more documentary data, which gave an indication that they understood the questionnaire and were interested in the research. What is more
interesting is that some participants asked if they could make a copy of the questionnaire to keep within their department for their own use. Most of the participants were happy to give the researcher their business cards, to enable contact to be maintained in the future.

The personal letters from the researcher and research sponsor urging the participants to co-operate with the researcher were very useful in obtaining the participants’ co-operation in completing the questionnaire. In addition, provision was made at the end of the questionnaire for participants to leave their contact details if they wanted a brief report of the final analysis of the research. This was a kind of reward for those participants who had devoted time and effort to completing the questionnaire.

Due to the fact that they appreciated the importance of the study, some managers were very interested and called to ask if they could be included in the interview sample. Some also asked about Hull University and the Centre for Management and Organisational Learning (CMOL) in it. They were provided with the requested information and given details of the University website. The enthusiastic response increases confidence in the reliability of the findings, because respondents are likely to provide more meaningful contributions if they find the study to be interesting and relevant.

4.4.8 Response Rate

The target sample was the entire population, which consisted of 158 public organisations. Therefore, a total of 158 questionnaires were distributed, of which 119 were returned, achieving an overall response rate of 75.3 per cent. However, upon checking and data cleaning, 4 questionnaires were omitted because they were
uncompleted. Therefore, 115 questionnaires were valid to be used for analysis, representing a response rate of 72.78 per cent, which is considered as an excellent rate for this type of research.

The high response rate for this study can be attributed to the following reasons:

1) The way in which the questionnaire was distributed affected the response rate. The questionnaire was self-administered to most of the organisations located in Riyadh because this method is recommended by many authors as a good method of data collection.

2) The covering letter from the researcher and the sponsor which accompanied the questionnaires helped. The letters explained the research objectives and assured respondents that their cooperation would make a major contribution to the success of this study.

3) It is also believed that the good layout of the questionnaire as well as the green colour in which it was printed also contributed to high response rate.

4) The fact that respondents were given an option to receive a copy of the research findings may also have contributed to the high rate of response.

5) The follow-up strategy adopted (phone calls, faxes, visits) to remind the respondents to answer the questionnaire might have encouraged them to do so.

It is worth mentioning that some organisations returned the questionnaire using the DHL courier service. Also, many of the questionnaires were returned with a cover letter which was signed by the Minister or by the Governor or Director–General of the
organisation. This gave an indication of the importance participating organisations attached to the research. In a study on SHRD in public and private organisations conducted in the Lothians and central Scotland, McCracken and Wallace (2000) achieved 86 useable returns from the questionnaire. Out of this figure they conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 per cent, which equals nine organisations. In this study the response was 115 organisations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 respondents, which is 20 per cent.

4.5 Interviews

The interview is a kind of conversation; a conversation with a purpose. It is one of the most frequently used methods of gathering data in social research (Burnard, 2005). This may be because the interview appears to be a quite straightforward and non problematic approach of finding things out (Robson, 2002). As a method of data collection, the interview involves verbal questions by the interviewer and oral response by the interviewee (Gillham, 2005). The main purpose of interviewing is to discover what is in and on someone else’s mind (Collis and Hussey, 2009). There are four types of interview used in social research. These types are the group interview (focus group), and structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In moving from the structured interview to the unstructured interview, we shift from a situation in which the researcher tries to control the interview through predetermining questions, to a situation in which the respondent is encouraged to answer a question in his or her own words (May, 2001).

A structured interview is similar to a questionnaire and has similar strengths and weaknesses. One of the main strengths of semi-structured and unstructured interviews,
in contrast, is their flexibility. They allow the respondent or researcher to modify and adjust interview questions to suit the situation. There are also sufficient opportunities to clarify and explain the overall research objectives, issues and clarify any misunderstanding. The interview provides respondents with the chance to answer without needing to write anything down (Saunders et al., 2009). Due to the flexible nature of the method, any question could be changed, omitted or added to when required, while it is difficult to remedy this situation in the case of the questionnaire.

The second advantage to this method is that the researcher can obtain many detailed responses to the questions which will lead to robust results because it gives the respondents ability and freedom to think aloud and reflect on events by expressing their opinion. Thirdly it allows the researcher to ask follow up questions, which is not possible with a questionnaire. A further advantage is the opportunity afforded the researcher to observe non-verbal cues, such as posture, actions and the facial expression of the interviewee, which may help in revealing his or her feelings and attitudes, and thereby enabling a higher degree of confidence in the replies than questionnaire responses (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

On the other hand, the interview method has disadvantages. The whole process of the interview could be described as expensive and time consuming, especially if there are a large number of respondents to be interviewed in dispersed geographical locations. Analytical skills and patience are important requirements, as the rich data resulting from unstructured interviews can be extremely difficult to analyse and tabulate. Transcription takes at least six times the duration of the interview. Researchers should not underestimate the amount of time required when transcribing. Finally, a number of data quality issues can be identified in relation to the use of semi-structured and in-depth
interviews, related to reliability; forms of bias; validity and generalisability (Collis and Hussy, 2009; Hall and Hall, 1996).

In this study, the semi-structured interview was chosen as an appropriate approach to obtain the deep data needed to complement the questionnaire. As the number of personnel to be interviewed was relatively small (23 in total), the cost was not too high, and the volume of data gathered was manageable. As for quality concerns, they were addressed by care in the formulation of questions and conduct of the interviews. The figure below illustrates the number of interviewees according to their organisations.

![Interview Sample](image)

**Figure 4.2: Interview sample**

### 4.5.1 The Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to provide in-depth explanation of HRD and its practices in Saudi Public Organisations. In view of this, certain questions were taken from the questionnaire and used in the interviews. Since the interviews were
semi-structured, core questions were supplemented by prompts and probes as appropriate, depending on the flow of the conversations between the researcher and interviews and the context of each interview.

The semi-structured interview included six sections which aimed to collect as much data as possible about the respondents’ perspective regarding the research objectives (see Appendix C). These sections were as follows:

- **Section One**: This was concerned with the organisation and respondents’ background.
- **Section Two**: It was concerned with a description of the departmental structure and the staff working in it.
- **Section Three**: The Concept of HRD. This section aimed to find out the respondent’s personal philosophy about HRD as a concept as well as its significance and purpose.
- **Section Four**: HRD practices. This section was concerned with the current HRD practices in the Saudi public sector. It included questions on the current status of HRD and the funds allocated to carry out the HRD activities. Also, it aimed at investigating what factors influenced the HRD practices in the organisations.
- **Section Five**: This section was concerned with investigation of the strategic position of HRD in Saudi public organisation. It aimed to find out if there was a written HRD plan and how it was related to the organisation’s strategy and the national development plan and strategies.
Section Six: HRD challenges and issues. This section attempted to investigate the issues and challenges facing HRD in public organisations and to look at the future direction of HRD, nation-wide and organisation specific.

4.5.2 Translation of Interview Schedule

The translation of the semi-structured interview schedule followed the same procedure as that of the questionnaire (section 4.4.3). When the interview schedule was approved, it was translated from English into Arabic. The technique of back-translation was used. The researcher benefited from the expert translators working in the translation department in the Institute of Public Administration (see Appendix B).

4.5.3 Conducting Pilot Interviews

A pilot test of the semi-structured interview schedule was conducted in order to find out whether it was usable and could provide the needed information. Researchers have shown that all types of questionnaires and interviews must be pilot tested (Fink and Kosecoof, 1998). The researcher followed similar procedures in piloting the semi-structured interview schedule to those used for the questionnaire. Therefore, when the draft of the schedule was completed, the researcher distributed copies of it to selected staff and PhD students in the field of HRM in Hull University and some other UK universities. The researcher asked them to give their opinion as to whether the schedule was clear and easy to understand, and whether they had any suggestions or recommendations to improve it.

Similarly, copies of the schedule were distributed to two academics specialising in Human Resource Management after completing the translation from English to Arabic. One of them was from the Institute of Public Administration and the other from King...
Saud University in Saudi Arabia. They were asked to assess the content of the schedule and whether the interview questions were appropriate for the people who were to be interviewed. They were also asked whether they had any additional comments or suggestions. The two pilot interviews conducted with HRD/T&D managers also helped in estimating the length of time interview would take and to also find out whether there were any ambiguities. These measures were taken to improve the validity of the findings.

4.5.4 Quality Issues of Semi-Structured Interviews

Some quality issues have been identified in relation to the use of semi-structured interviews, related to reliability, validity and forms of bias (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2002), the lack of standardisation of semi-structured interviews leads to reliability concerns, such as the issue of bias. There are three types of bias (Saunders et al., 2009). The first is related to researcher or interviewer bias which includes comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer. These could create bias in the way that respondents respond to the questions being asked. The second type is related to interviewee bias, which could result from prejudging the interviewer. The third type is a result of the nature of individual or organisational participants.

In this study, interviewer bias resulting from the comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour which could create bias in the way that respondents responded to the questions being asked was avoided. Interviewees’ bias was also minimized through gaining their trust and building a rapport with them.
In this study, the participants were asked questions and given the freedom to answer and express their meaning without any control or constraint being imposed. The researcher probed and asked the respondents to elaborate on certain responses and asked the same questions in different ways in order to validate their earlier responses. The researcher planned and controlled the time with care, as recommended by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002). Also, before ending any interview, the researcher gave a summary of the interview to the interviewee to confirm its content.

Whereas reliability in quantitative research or the phenomenological paradigm seeks to determine whether a similar interpretation would be made on different occasions and/or by different observers, there has been much debate with regard to the relevance of the traditional concept of reliability in a qualitative research. This is due to the nature and complexity of the phenomenon under investigation as argued by Bryman and Bell (2007). Moreover, if research is concerned with the experiences and perceptions of participants, it cannot be expected that these would remain static, so the idea of replication is not relevant. The general consensus among qualitative researchers is that we need to look at alternative evaluation criteria, such as dependability, trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1989; Collis and Hussey 2009; Bryman and Bell 2007). Dependability is about merit and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Trustworthiness concerns the extent to which a study can be audited. Authenticity refers to the ability of the investigation to produce a consensus of views on what is to be regarded as the truth. Taken together, these criteria reflect the soundness of qualitative research, which is equivalent to the concept of reliability in quantitative research. These criteria also improve the validity of the research as pointed out by Creswell and Miller (2000). Indeed, throughout the entire investigation, measures were taken to ensure that
these criteria were met, as reflected in the description of the procedures used in areas such as the design of the questions (e.g. back-translation), pilot sampling, interviewing techniques adopted, and interpretation of findings. In this study, every effort was made to make sure that the data collection methods were error free and to minimise bias. Hence, it can be argued that both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of this study have adequately considered reliability and validity issues.

4.5.5 Interview Sample

The interview sample was selected using a non-probability (or non-random) sampling technique. This technique ensured that the selected individuals were an appropriate sample: they all had the requisite experience and a deep understanding of the role and function of HRD. Therefore, the selection of the participants in the interviews was based on the researcher’s subjective judgement, in order to answer the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). The most important criterion for selecting the sample for the interview was that the participants were in charge of HRD/T&D departments. HRD or T&D managers were willing to participate in the research, and responded positively and immediately to the researcher’s request. In this study 23 HRD, T&D and OD managers were interviewed.

4.5.6 Interview Process

A support letter from the Institute of Public Administration was obtained in order to ease the process of gaining access and establishing credibility. When conducting the interview, the researcher began with general discussion and introducing himself and the purpose of the study. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was given a brief outline of the interview structure, permission was requested to record the
interviews, and the interviewees were again assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the interview guide in order to prepare themselves to give comprehensive answers to the questions. The researcher was able to form good relationships with the interviewees by visiting them at their workplaces. In this way he was able to assure them that their information would remain confidential.

All the interviews took place in the participants’ organisations, except for one which took place in a café, based on the participant’s preference. All these organisations were located in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

Interviews have to be recorded either by using a tape recorder or taking notes. Hall and Hall (1996) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both techniques. The advantages of note taking are that it is straightforward and does not involve any technology, which may go wrong. However, the interview notes should be written up as soon as possible in order to reduce the difficulty of recalling. The main advantage of taking notes is that it maximises the amount of data to examine, compared to what is produced by the tape recorder. However, the disadvantage of note taking is that it makes the interview less desirable, because the interviewer is likely to have his or her head down for long periods of time and eye contact will be lost, therefore some silences will be inevitable as they write. The longer the delay between interviewing and writing up, the more information will be lost.

In contrast, the advantages of a tape recording are that the interview becomes more like a conversation since all exchanges are recorded. For this reason, it is very important when the interviewer is winding the interview down, that the tape recorder is not
switched off immediately. The main problem with using a tape recorder is that it produces a mass of data, which then has to be transcribed fully. In addition, some people may find the tape recorder inhibiting and do not wish their conversation to be recorded. Therefore it is important always to ask the permission of the respondent before using a tape recorder (Collis and Hussey: 2009). Covert recording is unethical. All the interviews were taped except two. The two participants preferred not to be recorded but they allowed note-taking. The respondents also provided documentary data such as training plans, yearly training calendars, or details of the responsibilities of their departments. Most of the respondents offered tours of the training centre or training rooms in those organisations which had them. The researcher expressed his gratitude to all the interviewees after the session and later on sent them a formal letter of thanks. The researcher found these managers very supportive of the research and its objectives.

4.6 Supporting Documents

Although the research relied on questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as primary methods of data collection, secondary sources in the form of documents obtained from some of the participating organisations were also consulted. These documents included those dealing with training plans for the organisations and training evaluations done by external consultants. Others were on policy of training and scholarships for government employees and performance appraisal policies for public organisations employees. In terms of usage, these documents were found useful in illustrating how these organisation conduct HRD in practice.
4.7 Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the data, the process of interpreting begins with an effort to make sense out of it. This was done through an interpretive approach. According to Eisenhardt (1989), there is no standardized format for interpreting and analysing data. However, with regard to this study SPSS software was used to analyse data from the structured questionnaire. The descriptive form of analysing such as frequency, mean and standard deviation were performed using SPSS. Further, the findings were interpreted by the researcher.

The huge data generated from the semi-structured interviews were analysed through developing and identifying specific codes and themes. Rather than using others to transcribe the interviews, the researcher did the transcription. This was very rewarding because it enabled the researcher to become very conversant with the data. When it came to the stage of coding and analysis, the researcher could almost visualise the different portions of the interviews with the different respondents.

The transcripts were made directly after each interview, while the memory was still fresh. The transcription for each interview took an average of seven hours to accomplish. The transcription was done in Arabic. Thereafter the hand-written pages were given to a typist at the IPA to type it in Arabic. After proof-reading of the manuscripts against the originals, the transcripts were translated from Arabic to English by the professional translators at the IPA. Finally, the researcher performed counter-checking between the English transcripts and the Arabic originals. At times, he sought clarification on how some of the words and phrases were translated. In total, it took about six months to transcribe and translate the interviews.
Being very conversant with the issues at stake, the researcher opted not to employ any software in processing the data from the interviews. The researcher tried to develop and identify specific themes for each question. All the responses from all the participants for each question were pulled together. A system of coding was used for each set of responses in an attempt to identify the common themes among all of them.

4.7.1 Approaches to Coding

Coding is defined as, “the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways” (Flick 2009, p. 307). Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that interpreting data collected by researchers requires three procedures. These procedures are ‘open coding’, ‘axial coding’, and ‘selective coding’. However, Flick (2009) argued that these procedures should be seen, “neither as clearly distinguishable procedures nor as temporally separated phases in the process. Rather, they are different ways of handling contextual material between which the researchers move back and forth if necessary and which they combine” (307).

In open coding concepts are generated from the segmented data and connotations are attached to them. The aim here is to express data and phenomena in the form of concepts. In this process the data can be coded line by line, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph or the entire text. In axial coding, the data is refined and sorted into different categories generated from open coding. The relationships between categories are further developed and relations are formulated. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) axial coding also involves “the process of relating subcategories to a category. It is a complex process of inductive and deductive thinking involving several steps” (p. 14). Subsequently, selective coding takes axial coding to “a higher level of
abstraction” (Flick 1998:184). It is employed to elaborate the development and integration of the categories developed from the axial coding. The central phenomenon or the *story of the case* is captured here. Further examples and evidence are generated. A good code is one that captures the qualitative richness of a phenomenon and the overall essence of coding is to help the researcher in interpreting the data (Boyatzis, 1998). In analysing the data, the researcher tried to organize the codes according to the relevant themes that provide an insight into HRD conceptualization, practices and in the Saudi public organisations, as illustrated in Table 4.2 below.
Table 4.2: Theme Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>HRD activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. (P1)</td>
<td>‘There is a need to establish a <strong>systematic approach for training and development</strong> in order to ensure that every employee is getting the required development. I am not happy with our procedures for nomination because we depend directly on the <strong>manager’s personal judgments</strong> more than on a systematic approach. The nomination should be systematic to ensure <strong>equal opportunities</strong> among the ministry’s employees.’ (P.1).</td>
<td>Training needs assessment, Role of direct managers, Equal opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. (P14)</td>
<td>‘We are unable to conduct <strong>training programmes in-house</strong> for many reasons: we don’t have training rooms. That is why it is not only us depending on <strong>external training</strong> but most of the public organisations. I do believe that this is really not the right way in training. We should have our own training programmes to meet our real needs. These training programmes in <strong>IPA</strong> or elsewhere are designed for all, based on general topics and general training needs’ (P.14).</td>
<td>Method of training delivery, In-house training, External training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. (P22)</td>
<td>‘<strong>In-house training</strong> programmes take the organisation’s privacy into consideration. Also, it is unacceptable to gather the employees of the public sector on one training programme without paying attention to each organisation’s field of activity because the trainers will focus on giving lectures (<strong>theoretical subjects</strong>) that are <strong>not linked</strong> with their [trainees’] work’ (P.22).</td>
<td>In-house training, Limitations of external training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above example was generated from the responses provided by three participants during the semi-structured interview, to the question: “Can you explain when and how training is provided for employees in your organisation?” In responding to the above question, the participants were equally addressing a (follow-up) prompt from the researcher requesting the participants to specify if training was conducted in-house or being outsourced from external bodies.
4.8 Ethical Issues and Considerations

Any researcher has a responsibility to ensure the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants along with their interests, sensitivity and privacy. Bryman and Bell (2003) identified four ethical problems: harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy; and deception. In this study, some people might view the topic as sensitive. Therefore, a cover letter that explained the purpose and objectives of the study was included. They were also informed of the sponsoring body and were further assured of confidentiality.

In addition, it was ensured that the identity of individuals was separated from the information they gave. The procedure used to ensure anonymity was not to ask for names and other information which could identify participants in the research project. The researcher tried to establish trust and credibility. Participants were given assurance that the information would not be used for non-research purposes. They were assured of their right to withdraw at any time. Moreover, the participants’ identity, place and the location of the research were concealed. Confidentiality was in all cases assured at the very outset of the research process. The researcher worked consistently throughout all stages of the research process to ensure high ethical standards were adhered to.

4.9 Conclusion

In keeping with the research objectives, a mixed methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative data collection through a structured questionnaire, and qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires including items borrowed from a number of previous studies, with adaptation to the Saudi context, were directed to HRD/T&D/personnel managers in all 158 public organisations.
Questionnaires were distributed personally or by mail, depending on location, and a 73 per cent response rate was obtained. Semi-structured interviews were held with 23 HRD, T&D and OD managers. These covered the same basic themes as the structured questionnaire, but gave opportunity for the deeper explanation of HRD issues in the organisation concerned and in the Saudi public sector generally, through the perceptions and experiences of those most directly involved. The information obtained by these two methods is analysed and interpreted in the subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis of the data collected using the structured questionnaire (Appendix A). This chapter therefore partially addresses Research Objectives 2 to 4. The statistical package used to analyse the data is SPSS v16. For clarity of presentation, many tables in this chapter are presented in Appendix D, and each individual table referenced with a number after ‘Appendix D’. For example, Appendix D1 refers to Table 1 in Appendix D.

5.2. Statistical Analysis Techniques and Missing Data Analysis

The statistical analysis technique used must satisfy the data requirements. Consequently, different statistical analysis techniques were used depending on the data and the objective of the test. In general the techniques widely used in this analysis include descriptive analysis and Chi square test of association. The researcher found that this is the most appropriate statistic because of the nature of the research objectives is to find out, explore and describe the current practices of HRD and to explore the strategic position of public organisation in Saudi Arabia. The data were checked for missing answers, and missing data analysis did not suggest any significant presence of missing data.

5.3. Organisation and Structure Information

This section relates to Section A of the structured questionnaire survey and it presents an analysis of information regarding the participating organisations.
5.3.1 Respondents’ Organisation Profile

Out of the 158 distributed questionnaires, a total of 119 were returned, and of these, 115 usable questionnaires were used in this analysis. This good cooperation of the participants has been explained in the methodology chapter. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of respondents according to organisation. The smallest number of respondents was 10 (8.7%) from the Presidency/Bureau/Council category, and the greatest was 29 (25.2%) from public agencies and independent departments. On average, the distribution of respondents did not show wide variation; we can therefore conclude that no particular type of organisation dominates the findings. Also further analysis results are less likely to suffer from sampling inadequacy or bias.

### Table 5.1: Respondents’ profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/Training/Res. Agency</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public agency</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidency/Bureau/Council</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Status of the HRD Department

Appendix D1 shows the status of the HRD/T&D department within the organisation. 60% of the participants from all of the participating public organisations categorised their status as directorate, while 27.8% of the participants categorised their status as directorate general. 5.3% indicated ‘department’ and the remaining 2.6% were from ‘other’ departments/units. This result indicates that the majority (87.8%) of the participants were in the middle and senior management levels, and implies that they are more likely to be involved in both the formulation and implementation of HRD policies.
A Chi square test was performed to determine if there was any association between the status of the HRD function and the department responsible for HRD (see Appendix D3). The result was significant (p<0.01), indicating that there was an association between the status of HRD and the department responsible for it. Further examination of the cross tabulations revealed that the Presidency/Bureau/Council and the Ministry tended to have the higher status departments - directorate general and directorate, while the public agencies tended to have lower status HRD units such as departments and units.

A similar result to the above was found, when the position to whom the respondent reported was compared to the organisation. Appendix D2 shows the distribution of respondents by reporting responsibility. The Chi square test (Appendix D3) was significant (p < 0.01), indicating that there was an association between the position and organisation. The evidence tended to show that directorates general and directorates tended to report to high level superiors such as ministerial and deputy minister levels.

5.3.3 The Number and Educational Qualification of Level of Employees

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of HRD departments by number of employees. For example, 4 departments have 1 employee (far left bar of Figure 5.1), while 15 departments have 4 employees. The median number is 7 employees.
Figure 5.1: Distribution of departments by set number of employees

Most organisations had 3 and 4 HRD employees. Further analysis of the data showed that 41.7% of the organisations had fewer than 6 employees, while 66.1% of the organisations had fewer than 11 employees. Only 13.9% (19 departments) of the organisations had more than 17 employees. These departments with more than 17 employees were mostly those in healthcare and electricity organisations, which are generally very big organisations, in which a significant amount of training is needed.

About half of the employees working in HRD/T&D departments (50.4%) had a high school certificate or less, while 12.5% had a diploma. Nearly a third of the total employees (30.47%) working in HRD/T&D departments had an undergraduate degree, and at the end of the scale, about 6.6% had a higher level of education, i.e. 5.4% had a Master’s degree and 1.2% had a PhD degree. This level of qualification shows that the
public organisations are likely to suffer from lack of skilled personnel in HRD/T&D departments.

5.3.4 The Respondents’ Profile

5.3.4.1 Respondent’s Job Title

All the respondents were managers of HRD/T&D/OD or those who were in charge of HRD activities in each public organisation. Approximately 37.4% were organisational development managers; 14.8% were training managers, HRD managers accounted for 5.2% and Human Resource Managers (HRM) accounted for 2.3%. The remaining and also highest proportion of 39.1% were categorised as ‘other’. This ‘other’ category comprised mostly employees who had been seconded from other departments such as Finance and Administration. An interesting finding is that the job titles of the respondents who were in charge of HRD activities were very varied, ranging from OD, HRD, HRM and development to training, manpower, personnel and scholarship and others.

5.3.4.2 Respondent’s Total Work Experience in the Organisation and in the Field of HRD/T&D

Appendix D4 shows the number years of work experience and the number of years experience in the field of training and development (T&D). The results show that most of the respondents had very many years of work experience generally, and in the field of T&D specifically. The mean and median work experience were 18 years and 21 years respectively, while the mean and median for working in T&D were 11 years and 10 years respectively. This implies that the respondents should have been familiar with their jobs, and hence their answers are more likely to be valid.
5.3.4.3 Age of the Respondents

Just over 61% of the respondents were aged between 41 and 50 years; 21% were aged 31 to 40 years, while those over 50 years accounted for 14%. Those below 31 years formed only 3.5% of the sample (Appendix D5). This gives an indication that the respondents were mature in terms of age and were more likely to have the needed experience to manage HRD activities.

5.3.4.4 Education Levels and Major of the Respondents

The education level of the respondents is shown in Appendix D6, and shows that 86% had a degree or higher. That is, 53% had undergraduate degrees, 26% a Masters degree and 7% a PhD. Diploma holders accounted for 13% while only 4% were educated to high school level or less. Again, this high level of education is likely to improve the validity of the research because the respondents would be likely to understand the questions and issues.

Interestingly Appendix D7 shows the specialism or major fields of study of the survey respondents. As shown, there were 54 different fields of education background. The finding indicates that most HRD positions were occupied by people who had not majored in the field of HRM or related subjects. The highest proportion of 14% was those with public administration as their specialism. This was followed by three specialism each accounting for 6% - economics, business and administration. Interestingly, only 3.5% (i.e. 4 people) had specialized in HRM.
5.4. Practice of HRD in Organisations

This section investigates the practice of HRD in the public organisations and relates to Section B of the questionnaire.

5.4.1 Training and Development Needs Analysis

Just over 81.7% of the 115 public organisations did training and development needs analysis (T&DNA). For those who provided this, 88.3% provided this every year or less; 6.4% did this every two years; 3.2% every three years and only 2.1% did it less frequently than every three years (Appendix D8) The conclusion is that on balance, organisations did T&DNA quite frequently (at least once per year).

5.4.2. T&DNA Methods

Table 5.2 shows the results of the frequency and descriptive mean scores in response to the question, ‘To what extent do you apply the following methods in determining and analysing employees’ training and development needs? The scale used was: 5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T &amp; DNA Method</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>F %</th>
<th>S %</th>
<th>R %</th>
<th>N %</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire survey to the employees</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal interviews with employees</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct observation of employees’ work and behaviour</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal report</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing employee’s job description</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of department or line manager’s report</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through special training committee</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never;
NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score
The results in Table 5.2 show that the organisations used all these methods, although to differing degrees. On balance, the organisations used these methods ‘sometimes’ because the mean scores for each item are close to the ‘sometimes, score of 3. However, two methods are outstanding. The first one is ‘personal interviews with employees.’ The mean score was 2.56, which is quite low. This means that ‘personal interviews with employees’ are, in general, less used than others. The second method is ‘Head of department or line manager’s report’, with a high mean score of 3.77. This means that this method is, on average, frequently used.

### 5.4.3 Consideration of Selected Issues in T&DNA

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they considered selected issues in T&DNA. The results are shown in Table 5.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T &amp; DNA Issues</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We examine top management &amp; senior managers’ opinions and perceptions regarding the organisation’s future direction and outlook</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We take into account employees’ opinions and perceptions of the organisation</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We examine the financial position of organisation</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We examine change and development in the organisation</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We examine and consider government strategies in HRD</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We examine individual employees’ need for training and development</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We examine job responsibilities</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never; 
NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score
Examination of top management and senior management, and also the examination of job responsibilities dominate, with mean scores of 4.22 each. The results in Table 5.3 show that two of the issues had mean scores that averaged ‘sometimes’. These were: ‘We examine and consider government strategies in HRD’, (mean = 3.27) and ‘We take into account employees’ opinions and perceptions of the organisation’ (mean = 2.81). Generally, the above analysis shows that the rest of the issues were, on average, frequently applied, with considerable numbers responding ‘Always’ in most of the issues.

### 5.4.4 Situations When Training is Provided

The results for frequency and the descriptive mean scores are presented in Table 6.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When is training provided</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>F %</th>
<th>S %</th>
<th>R %</th>
<th>N %</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When employees are newly recruited</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When employees are upgraded to a higher position</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When employees move to another department to have a new position</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When performance appraisal assessment shows some weakness</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the employees request it</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the top management specifically request it</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When new technologies or methods are introduced</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in my organisation is on a regular basis (e.g. Every year)</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>227.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we reorganise all the departments</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there is a scholarship from a training centre</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never;
NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score

The results in Table 5.4 show that on average, training was provided ‘frequently’ in some situations and ‘rarely’ in others. However, there are some very interesting findings.
here. For example, on average, training was rarely provided even if the performance appraisal showed some weaknesses, with 50% of the respondents citing ‘rarely’ or ‘never’. This tends to defeat one of the main reasons for appraisal. Also when employees move in from another department or are promoted, they are rarely given training. Another surprising result in that the mean score for training of new recruits is 2.77, which is quite low. This means that on average, new recruits are rarely given training. A possible explanation for this is that the civil service system considers new recruits as ‘on trial’ for the first year. This is quite interesting, given the fact that new recruits are likely to need some form of training as soon as they join an organisation.

5.5 Training Methods

5.5.1 Training Forms

Table 5.5 shows the extent of the use of three methods of training and development (T&D): on-the-job, off-the-job but within the organisation and off-the-job training outside of the organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Training</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-the-job training but within the organisation</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-the-job training (outside the organisation)</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never;
NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score

On-the-job training and off-the-job training but within the organisation tended to average out at ‘sometimes’, with mean scores of 2.90 and 3.01 respectively. However,
off-the-job training (outside the organisation) tended to score very highly with a mean of 4.23. Each of the organisations used this method, and only in 3.5% was it rarely used, with 40% using it frequently, and 43.5% using it all the time.

Chi square tests were carried out to determine if there was any association between the use of off-the-job training (outside the organisation) and the organisation type. The results showed that no such association existed (p = 0.213). A possible explanation for this is that there are public training institutions for public organisation employees.

### 5.5.2 T&D Frequency

With regard to frequency of employees training (off and on the job) according to their job title level (rank), the frequency and descriptive scores are shown in Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job rank/position</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative employees</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never; NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score

With the exception of senior management, of whom 28.7% rarely or never received any training, the rest of the employees received, on average, frequent training, with administrative staff receiving the most training. This result appears to show that on average, lower rank employees are provided with more training than upper ranks (management). Indeed, supervisory, technical and technical employees all had scores of over 3.8, which means on average they received training ‘frequently’. Although middle
managers were also trained ‘frequently’, their mean score was slightly lower at 3.56. The mean score for senior managers corresponded to ‘sometimes’, with a mean score of 3.15.

5.5.3 Off-the-job Training, but in Saudi Arabia

Table 5.7 shows off-the-job training but within Saudi Arabia. The results show that training within Saudi Arabia was mostly through the Institute of Public Administration, which was always used in 67.0% of the cases, and frequently used in 19.1% of cases. The reason for this high proportion is that the Institute of Public Administration is a specialist organisation whose role is to train public sector employees. The next most popular training provider were private training centres, which on average were used ‘sometimes’, with a mean score of 3.17. Universities and vocational and technical training were used, on average, ‘rarely’.

Table 5.7: Off-the job training but within Saudi Arabia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of on-the-job training within Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Public Administration</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational and technical training</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private training centres</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never; NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score

The above results can be more clearly demonstrated in the graph below (Figure 5.2), which shows pictorially how the Institute of Public Administration compares with other providers.
Figure 5.2: Usage of sources of off-the-job training in Saudi Arabia

5.5.4 Training outside Saudi Arabia

Table 5.8 shows the countries in which employees who are trained outside of Saudi Arabia were trained.

Table 5.8: Countries of training outside Saudi Arabia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of training outside Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>F %</th>
<th>S %</th>
<th>R %</th>
<th>N %</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Always; 4 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; and 1 = Never; 
NB: Columns 2 to 6 are frequency (%) and column 7 is the mean score

The results show that by far the most popular place was Egypt, with 58.3% of the organisations frequently or always sending employees to this country. The UAE also scored quite highly, with 29.1% of respondents saying training took place there.
‘sometimes’ and 35.6% ‘frequently’. The rest of the countries or regions – Jordan, Malaysia, USA and Europe, were on average, used ‘rarely’.

5.5.5 Main reasons for Training outside Saudi Arabia

Table 5.9 shows the main reasons for training outside Saudi Arabia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for training outside Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Relative Proportion (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting different experience</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees’ desire for training outside Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate training in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward for employees</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in the quality of training outside Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of contract when purchasing materials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5.9, the highest ranked reason was ‘Getting different experience’ (30%), followed by ‘lack of appropriate training in Saudi Arabia’ (18%). The third reason, ranked with 17%, is an interesting one – ‘reward for employees’, reflecting a view of training abroad as a sort of holiday offered as a perquisite to selected employees. It would be interesting to know more about how this is determined in practice. Further light is shed on such attitudes in the interviews, reported in a later chapter. Belief in the quality of training outside Saudi Arabia and the need to adhere to contractual purchase agreements (that require employees to be trained outside Saudi Arabia) scored relatively lowly with 9% and 8% respectively. Other reasons accounted for only 4%. On balance, we see that there are broadly four main reasons for training employees abroad.
5.6 Training and Development Evaluation

Training and development evaluation was measured using the following scale: 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. Fifty seven percent of the organisations evaluated their training and development, while 43% did not.

5.6.1 Main reasons for not evaluating T&D

The most important reason for this was ‘Difficulties in measuring T&D programmes’ with a mean score of 3.96. This was followed by, ‘Measuring process takes a long time’, with a mean score of 3.81. The third most important reason was ‘Objectives of training and development programmes are not always clear’ with a mean score of 3.40. Surprisingly, ‘the cost of training’ was found to be the least important of these reasons, with a mean score of 3.19.

5.6.2 Methods used in T&D evaluation

The methods used in T&D evaluation were measured using the scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Neither; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Always. The mean scores are summarised in Table 5.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training and programme evaluation method</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testing the employees before and after the training programmes</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask employees to fill a questionnaire at the end of the programme</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview employees after each training programme</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the employee’s manager or supervisor for their assessment of employee’s learning</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare the performance of employees before and after each training programme</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Table 5.10 are quite interesting. The fact that the mean score for ‘ask employees to fill a questionnaire at the end of the programme’ was 3.89, corresponding to ‘frequently’, indicates that the main approach to the evaluation process used by the organisations was to evaluate the reaction of employees to the training programmes attended. The next most widely used method was, ‘Ask the employee’s manager or supervisor for their assessment of employee’s learning’, with a mean score of 3.24. The generally low scores, however, provide strong evidence that on balance, the organisations rarely evaluated their programmes. The most worrying thing is that, in most cases, it was indicated that employees were not tested before and after training. Therefore it would not be possible to see if the trainees have benefited from the training. Sometimes the trainee’s supervisor or manager was asked to air his/her opinions on the performance of the employee after the training. However, this appears to be only sometimes, and it is unlikely that this is set procedure, given the overall findings on this issue.

5.7 Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal was measured using the following scale: 5 to 1 to where 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 disagree; 1 = strongly disagree.

Table 5.11 shows the extent of the use of performance management systems by the various organisations.
Table 5.11: Frequency and mean scores for use of performance appraisal systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance management system</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have a yearly employee’s performance appraisal</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We compare employee’s current performance with performance standards to determine performance gap</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We analyse employee’s acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes after HRD activities</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have reward strategies for high performance</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We discuss performance with employees</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is very clear from Table 5.11 that yearly performance appraisal was performed by respondents, on average, frequently or always (mean = 4.30). This is because the civil service system requires a yearly employee performance appraisal. There also appears to be some evidence of infrequent use of analysis of the employees’ acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes after HRD activities. The least used system was, ‘We have reward strategies for high performance’, which respondents in 46.1% of the organisations said was rarely or never used. The rest of the systems were used, on average, ‘sometimes’.

5.8 HRD and Budgets

Forty-eight per cent of the respondents felt that their organisations were getting the appropriate budgets for HRD, while 52% did not. Cross tabulations showed that 46% felt that compared to the previous year, the budget had increased, while 51% felt that it had remained the same. Only 3% felt that the budget had actually decreased. Based on this we could argue that on balance the budgets are, at the very least, staying the same, but are more likely to increase. Chi square association tests showed that the issues relating to budgets were not associated with the organisation type, which implies fairness in funding among the departments.
5.9 Strategic HRD

With regard to strategic HRD, three variables were measured – Strategies, Policy and Plan. The respondents were asked to give a Yes/No answer to whether they felt that their organisation had strategies. For Strategies, 53.9% felt that their organisation had a strategy, while 46.1% felt otherwise. There was a similar result for Policy, where 56.5% felt that their organisation had a Policy, but 43.5% felt this was not the case. However, in the case of Plan, 94.8% felt that their organisation had a Plan, while only 5.2% felt that this was not the case. That Plans are available is not surprising, given the fact that the government requires public organisations to produce yearly plans.

Respondents were also asked whether the Strategies, Policy and Plans were written or not. The result for Strategies was that only 33.9% felt that this was written, while 66.1% did not. This was similar to Policy, where 33% felt this was written, while 67% did not. However, the result for Plan was different, with 73% feeling that the Plan was written and only 27% thinking otherwise.

The above results are quite interesting. They show that Strategies and Policy exist in about only half of the organisations, but more interestingly these are largely unwritten, which raises issues of consistency in implementation. We can therefore infer that while policies may exist in writing, their application in practice is likely to differ between organisations.

We also know that the existence of a written Plan is largely due to the fact that it is a requirement by the government. This then raises issues on how proactive the HRD is. With regard to the frequency of review of the Plan and Policy, the responses showed that 60% of respondents thought these were reviewed at least once a year, while 15%
claimed they were reviewed at intervals of between 1 to 3 years, and 25% said they were reviewed at intervals of more than 3 years.

Table 5.12 shows the results when the respondents were asked to cite the current HRD activities, which were aimed at determining the level of sophistication or maturity of HRD strategy. The two main activities were: ‘Training is the means for implementing strategy and achieving goals’ (cited 42% of respondents) and ‘Training is isolated and tactical’ (cited by 37% of respondents).

Table 5.12: Current HRD activities showing the level of sophistication/maturity in HRD strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRD Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and learning are processes through which strategy is formulated</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; learning help to shape strategy.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is the means for implementing strategy and achieving goals.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is integrated with operational management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is isolated and tactical.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no systematic training in our organisation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 5.12 show that there is no clear picture of the extent to which HRD is integrated with strategy.

5.9.1 Strategy Practice in HRD organisations

A series of 21 questions on HRD strategy were asked, where the respondents rated each statement on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. Appendix D9 shows the results of the items aimed at exploring issues regarding the extent to which HRD is strategic within each organisation.
At least 70.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that HRD strategies, policies and plans were linked to the overall strategy of the organisation, while 18.3% were unsure. Only 10.4% disagreed with this, with a further 0.9% strongly disagreeing with this. We can therefore argue that this is strong evidence that there is a link between HRD strategy and overall organisational strategy. This, in principle, should result in better HRD practices. However, it is necessary to investigate using more indirect questions to determine in practice whether HRD is integrated with overall strategy.

One key feature of a successful HRD strategy is that it must be supported by top/senior management. The finding was that 48.7% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that top/senior management are in support of HRD strategy. A further 37.4% agreed with this statement, indicating that 85.1% of the respondents at least agreed with this statement. Another 8.7% were unsure, while only 4.3% disagreed. This is clear evidence that top/senior managers are supportive when it comes to HRD issues. This is likely to lead to more successful outcomes whenever HRD issues need to be resolved.

One method of checking if top managers do really support HRD activities is to see if they ‘put their money where their mouths are’. This was determined by asking the respondents whether HRD budgets had been significantly increased over the last five years. The evidence was found to be a bit more spread, particularly when compared with that for top management support. The findings show that 16.5% strongly agreed, and 38.3% agreed, making a total of 54.8% who at least agreed. However, a substantial 23.5% were unsure and 19.1% disagreed, with a further 2.6% disagreeing very strongly. We can therefore conclude that while budgets had improved over the last five years, the
improvements were not equally distributed, which then raises issues of equality, and whether the objectives set by HRD would be met.

Like any business, public sector organisations face external threats, but equally they also can benefit from external opportunities. Consequently respondents were asked to determine the extent to which they felt that their organisation scanned the external environment for opportunities that are available to HRD. The response was generally ‘middle of the road’, with 44.4% at least agreeing, but a significant 33.9% being unsure and 19.1% at least disagreeing. This implies that external opportunities to improve HRD practice could be missed in a substantial number of organisations due to lack of external environment analysis or scanning.

A key element of strategic HRD is that line managers must be involved in HRD activities such as the evaluation of activities on the effectiveness of training, the conduct of training sessions, the analysis of staff training needs, the mentoring/coaching of employees, support of HRD by line managers and whether HRD and T&D are the responsibility of line managers. Respondents were asked for their opinions on these issues. Opinions tended to vary widely between each of these activities. For example, when it came to the evaluation of the effectiveness of training, 41.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that the line managers were involved. However, 33% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, and a further 24.3% were undecided. The pattern was similar for line management’s involvement in conducting training sessions, and in mentoring/coaching. However, a high 63.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that HRD/T&D is the responsibility of line managers. Another high 62.6% agreed that line managers were actively involved in the analysis of training needs for staff and 53.1% of the respondents felt that line managers were supportive of HRD.
Therefore we can conclude that, on balance, the involvement of line managers is practised to varying degrees, depending on the organisation. The implication is that there is a level of involvement in HRD by line managers, albeit not equally spread among the organisations studied.

Integration of activities between HRD and other sections of Personnel/HRM is important if HRD is to be strategic and effective. Respondents were asked if HRD and Personnel/HRM activities were integrated. The result was a mixed one. While 37.4% agreed, 28.7% were unsure, and 15.7% disagreed. This means that integration existed, but it was weak in some organisations. A possible explanation for this is that in the Saudi organisational structures, HRD and Personnel are separate functions. HRM is not well-developed yet in the public sector organisations.

National development plans have impact on HRD strategy in public sector organisations because it is considered to be strategic for the government. Respondents were generally positive about this, with 63.5% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Only 13.0% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining 22.6% were unsure. We can therefore conclude that on balance, there is strong evidence that the national plan has a positive impact on organisational HRD.

For an organisation to have strategic HRD, the organisation must foster a learning culture that is conducive to the smooth running of the organisation. Respondents were asked whether in their organisation, there was a learning culture where training was the responsibility of everyone, or of the individual, rather than the organisation. With regard to learning culture being seen as everyone’s responsibility, respondents generally agreed that this was a responsibility for everyone, with 20.9% strongly agreeing with this, and 44.3% agreeing. A further 19.1% were unsure, and only 14.8% either strongly disagreed
or disagreed with this. However, with regard to learning being seen as an individual’s responsibility, not that of the organisation, there were very strong feelings that this was not the case, with 53.0% disagreeing and a further 16.5% strongly disagreeing. Only 2.6% agreed and 2.3% strongly agreed, while 13.9% were the undecided. Hence this is strong evidence that organisations are fostering a culture of learning and development, and hence they can be considered as being strategic. This is due to the fact that the HRM system looks at training as a duty for the organisation and part of an employee’s job to be trained.

5.10 Issues and Challenges in HRD

Respondents were asked to respond to 15 issues relating to issues and challenges for HRD, on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. The table of results is presented in Appendix D10.

Four key issues/challenges emerged from the questions that were raised. The first issue, and perhaps the most prevalent and important, was the lack of skilled manpower in the HRD/T&D departments or units. Such is the extent of the problem that 23.5% of the respondents felt very strongly that this was a major challenge, and another 49.6% agreed, meaning that 73.1% of the respondents felt that this was a problem. A further 10.4% were unsure, while only 14.8% did not perceive this to be a problem. We can therefore conclude that skills shortage is a critical limitation on the effective practice of HRD in Saudi public sector organisations.

A second major challenge that was identified was that employees were failing to apply what they had learnt in HRD programmes such as those run by the Institute of Public
Administration. The evidence for this comes from the fact that over 73.9% of the respondents felt that this was a major problem, with only 16.6% not seeing this as problem. This raises issues on the quality of training, or even the selection of employees for training.

The third key challenge that was identified was the adverse impact of government bureaucracy and regulations. There is too much centralisation of HRD activities by the government. Indeed, 59.2% of the respondents felt that this was a problem, while 25.2% were rather undecided, and only 12.8% did not feel that this was a problem.

The fourth major issue that was identified related to employees’ personal circumstances. Over 63.5% of the respondents felt that in many cases, training was hampered by the employee’s personal circumstances such as family responsibility (e.g. women cannot drive and hence, if the man of the household was away on a training course, activities such as driving children to school or hospital could cause problems for families). Only 21.7% did not feel that this was much of a challenge.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the quantitative analysis of the data collected using the structured questionnaire. Descriptive analysis and Chi square tests were employed to address the research questions raised in Chapter 1. Descriptive analysis (e.g. frequency distributions, mean scores, standard deviation) was used to provide the essential information on HRD issues in the organisations under study. This information was crucial because it filled a gap in literature on research in HRM in Saudi Arabia – basic descriptive information on HRD practice in Saudi public sector organisations. Chi square tests provided crucial information on objective tests. The extent to which
strategic HRD is practised in Saudi public organisation was analysed. Finally, important issues and challenges faced by Saudi organisations’ HRD departments were identified.

It was found that HRD managers were mostly located at middle and senior management levels; higher level organisations such as Presidency/Bureau/Council and Ministry tended to have higher status HRD departments. Respondents were highly educated and experienced, but few had specialized in HRM.

The majority of organisations claimed to conduct regular TNA, but training was rarely provided for new employees, or in response to a poor performance appraisal. Off-the-job training predominated; including some popular overseas destinations, which were favoured as a source of different experience. A large proportion of organisations did not evaluate training effectiveness, mainly due to perceived difficulties of doing so. Regarding strategic HRD, the great majority of respondents thought their organisations had a plan, but little more than half felt it had a policy or strategies, and these were largely unwritten. Top management was generally considered supportive of HRD, but budget improvements were not equally distributed and involvement of line managers in HRD was variable.

Four key issues or challenges for HRD were raised: lack of appropriately skilled manpower, failure to transfer training from training to the workplace, constraints imposed by government bureaucracy, and conflict between employees’ personal circumstances such as family responsibilities, and their training needs. The issues raised in this chapter will be explored future in the discussions presented in subsequent chapters, though the findings of the interviews.
CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH QUESTION I: HOW DO HRD PRACTITIONERS IN THE SAUDI PUBLIC SECTOR CONCEPTUALIZE HRD?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, together with analysis of the other qualitative data resulting from documents.

As discussed in the research methodology chapter (chapter 4), 23 semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with HRD/T&D managers of Saudi public organisations. The justifications for interviewing HRD/T&D have also been discussed in the methodology chapter of the study. The primary aims of the interviews were to investigate how HRD/T&D managers defined the concept of HRD, their experiences of and approaches to HRD practices in Saudi public organisations, what they think about it, whether they think the HRD/T&D function is strategic or not and how they conceptualise that, what problems and challenges face HRD/T&D professionals, and finally their expectations of the future direction of HRD in the Saudi public sector.

Thematic analysis was used to investigate the participants’ perceptions. Thematic dimensions (categories) were identified during the analysis process based on a close reading of the interview transcripts and the interview notes. The number of participants indicating each theme will not be reported. Rather, the emphasis will be on hearing the participants’ voices through quotations excerpted from the interview transcripts. In order to maintain respondent confidentiality the origins of the quotations are identified through the use of participant indices beginning with the letter (P) to substitute the word ‘participant’ followed by the assigned transcript number from 1 to 23.
6.2 Background Profile of Interview Respondents

It is essential for the reader to have an overview of the background of the respondents who were interviewed for this research. This will give an insight into their educational qualifications and work experience in the field of HRD in public organisations. In terms of educational qualification it varies. Thirteen of them have a bachelor’s degree, five have a master’s degree and four have doctorate degrees. Only one of the respondents has a High School certificate. This suggest that majority of the respondents are well-educated.

![Figure 6.1: Educational Qualifications of Participants](image)

However, what is interesting is that although all of them head HRD/T&D departments in their respective organisations, none of them specialized in the field of HRD. Twelve of them specialized in the fields of public administration and management. The remaining eleven have qualifications not related to HRD/HRM at all such as pharmacy, history, agriculture and geography.
In terms of work experience in the field of HRD, nine of the participants have less than 10 years experience, while six of them have experience between 10-20 years. Eight of the participants have experience of 20 years and above. The number of employees in the organisations varies from as little as 258 to as much as 14,300. These variations can be explained in terms of the role of the organisations. For example commissions have smaller number of employees while ministries have larger numbers. In the following sections and the finding of the research question will be discussed.

6.3 Question One: How do HRD practitioners in Saudi Public Sector conceptualize HRD?

Following the collection of profile data and using this research question as a guide the researcher began the interview process by asking participants to reveal their perceptions of HRD: what it is and what it does. However, investigating and exploring how HRD is conceptualized by HRD practitioners in the Saudi public sector organisations was a challenging task. This was partly due to the fact that the process involved different answers from the various individuals involved. Their subsequent responses made it clear that they were not necessarily directly defining the term HRD. Indeed, some participants expressed surprise at the question. This showed that they had given scant attention to what is meant by the term HRD. For example, one practitioner (P3) mentioned that ‘The concept of HRD in the public and private sectors, its applications and returns are not given any consideration. That means the culture of HRD is not widespread or is still weak’. Another General Manager of Training and Development admitted that ‘The concept of HRD in text books is different from what we practise’ (P21). Along the same lines a general director of administrative development in one of the largest ministries in the kingdom shared his view; with some disappointment he
explained, ‘The way I see it, HRD in Saudi public organisations is vague. There is a lot of talk about HRD and the importance of HRD, but no serious steps have been taken to make it tangible’ (P22).

A long standing practitioner from a big public organisation reflected back on his time in the field and on how the concept of HRD had changed and evolved:

‘I want to add a very important point about HRD definition, which is that I have been in the HRD field for more than 20 years, and the concept of HRD, has involved many elements and changes from training to training and development, and then HRD. Nowadays, we hear new attractive and fancy terms such as human capital and investing in people. But regardless of the names or terms that are used, the basic concept is training, irrespective of these terms. For some people HRD is a buzzword, they know only training’ (P8).

This OD director raised a concern that HRD practitioners in the public sector organisations are not very advanced in their practice of HRD. Therefore, they still carry out HRD activities using a traditional approach as a way of providing training to employees, rather than by using a more structured and systematic approach. In the same vein, a Training and Scholarship manager described what he saw as a misconception of the HRD concept by saying, “The development of human resources is [ seen as ]a new concept for training but it is wider than training and includes innovation” (P9). Such comments reflected a situation in which some participants, at least, were aware of the concept of HRD as presented theoretically, but also that practice continued to be governed by embedded knowledge and assumptions, which were reflected throughout their discourse.
Despite not having previously given explicit thought to definitions of HRD, the participants were very open to discussing their views and experiences. Their answers were grouped into two dimensions, with their related themes, as follows:

### 6.3.1 Dimension I: Significance and Value of HRD

This dimension includes the arguments in support of HRD/T&D activities within organisations: the ways in which an organisation can advance and benefit through its HRD/T&D efforts. Four main themes emerged from the data analysis, as follows:

2. Employee Benefit (Satisfaction and Retention).
3. Organisational Benefit.
4. Social/Community Benefit.

#### 6.3.1.1 Theme I: Economic/Financial Benefit

The first related theme is the monetary gains that result from HRD activities and efforts. The participants used terms like ‘return on investment’ and ‘organisation’s capital’ when referring to the value of the workforce. The workers are seen as a valuable asset in themselves and also in terms of the financial rewards they will bring to the organisation as a result of the investments made in their training and development. One participant, who for more than two decades had worked as the Manpower Development Manager in one of the largest ministries in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, employing over five thousand personnel, reflected on this perception of employees as a resource to be developed:

> ‘HR is considered as the organisation's capital, while the other assets are temporary. HR is a very expensive and valuable asset so if we don't develop them or invest in them to be useful, then they can be considered as a waste of resources’ (P1).
This reference to HR as ‘the organisation’s capital’ makes it clear that the workforce is seen as the foundation on which to build greater ‘wealth’. Another participant from a public organisation also made it clear that there was a need to demonstrate the particular gains from investments in HRD. He distinguished between the financial benefits of public and private organisations with the following comment:

‘The companies which invest in training can achieve effective results such as spending one dollar to generate 30 dollars, whereas the directions or instructions of the public sector aim at providing excellent services’ (P3).

Later, this participant, who has spent more than 23 years in the field of HRD as a trainer and now as Director of Planning and Development Department, mentioned that some senior managers in public organisations view employees as costly assets. His own words were, ‘Top management in the public sector looks at the employee as a cost that does not require development’ (P3). Another participant expressed a similar view when he said, ‘Some managers consider training as a pleasure [trip]’ (P4). Many participants shared the idea that training was a reward, a ‘holiday’ away from the office, with the result that no serious benefit is expected, so there is a cost but no return. In other words, training was seen as opposed to, rather than conducive to productive work. These participants thought in terms of pairs of opposite concepts: recreation vs labour, and cost vs return, and from this perspective, saw training as having no economic value. This notion will be discussed in further detail during the analysis of HRD practices. However, the same participant indicated that a contrasting view was also prevalent when he went on to say that ‘Some managers regard training as an investment’ (P4). In a similar vein, another OD general manager viewed training as a long-term investment but interestingly, he suggested that current Saudi thinking has not kept pace with the international view in this respect, when he said, ‘At the international level, training is
considered as investment, not a cost, but until now we in Saudi Arabia are still discussing this issue’ (P6).

Inherent in this financial perspective of HRD is the notion that people are a valuable but costly asset, one to be weighed and valued and one which has a price and a yield. These views were raised by some participants. These factors are illustrated in the following three quotations. The first one is from the manager of a Planning and HRD department in a large Saudi organisation; the second one is from an OD manager in local government and the third one is from a senior experienced central Planning and HRD director in a big public agency.

‘People are the most valuable and costly asset of any organisation. But they need to be developed in order to be valuable for an organisation. However, this valuable asset can be wasted if they are not developed and don’t maximize their work and effort’ (P7).

‘In my opinion, investment in HRD represents an essential element that is characterized with a high rate of return.

Some studies showed that investment in HRD exceeds the amount or size of investment in other sectors’ (P20).

‘....human beings are a very important topic and we notice that investment in human beings is profitable and if you invest a specific amount, surely you will get it back six-fold. Therefore, it is very important to let the employee feel that he has an essential role in this organisation so he should develop his skills via attending training courses’ (P23).
It is notable that these three participants used the language of investment banking to express their assumption that expenditure on training is a means of exploiting an asset in order to generate profit; the third respondent went so far as to express in quantitative terms the level of yield expected.

Another participant from a large organisation employing 9,000 personnel, similarly saw employees as an asset to be developed, and saw this as a major factor in company success:

‘The success of leading international and regional companies can not only be attributed to their capital, high quality of their products and services but also to the investment in human capital or HR as the key to success’ (P13).

The above statements emphasise the economic value and significance of HRD. HRD activities and efforts should generate economic returns that are greater than or at least on a par with the investments made in money and effort. One participant with 23 years of experience in the field of HRD described ‘developing employees’ as like investing in market share, as illustrated in the following quotation:

‘When we spend 1000 SR for training and developing an employee, we will gain 10,000 SR after we train him. Because he certainly will benefit from this training through increasing his productivity and performing his responsibilities accurately...’ (P4).

However, another participant disagreed with the notion that these sorts of returns could be counted in monetary terms or quantitatively:

‘I do not agree with this phrase or opinion because it is difficult to connect training with this kind of return. We don't find any organisation that measures or assesses the outcome of training quantitatively, except factories or plants’ (P16).

When asked to explain, he asserted the difficulty of measuring training outcomes, by analogy with line production of goods:
‘In my view as a specialist in HR and manager of HRD, we should give consideration to the outcomes of training but we should not concentrate on assessing them quantitatively, even in factories. For instance, goods in these factories are not produced by one employee but there are a group of employees who participate in the process of production, which is called line production. Therefore, it is very difficult to assess the outcomes of training’ (P16).

A manager in the Training and Scholarship Department of a major ministry in the Kingdom, with 29 years of experience working in training departments in various public organisations and positions, pursued the investment analogy but was critical of the effectiveness in terms of the outcomes produced. He said, with a level of frustration that was reflected in his facial expression and in his tone of voice, to such a degree that the researcher had to move the recorder further away:

‘Unfortunately, investment in HR doesn’t have any return, especially in the governmental sector. For instance, we spend 7 millions SR but the return doesn’t reach one million, which means we waste 6,000,000. And this failure can be attributed to the absence of objectives and plans that are not linked with requirements and career path. Moreover, the regulations don’t assist us in benefiting from this investment’ (P 9).

As the above comments illustrate, one major implication of the view that human resources are analogous to financial resources is that it divides opinion over the best way to measure and maximise returns on investments. Opinion is divided over the most effective methods for delivering and measuring HRD, as exemplified by the participant who expressed scepticism about the use of quantitative methods to measure training outcomes. However, P 13 takes a more balanced approach; in his opinion, investment in HRD is equally as important to the success of an organisation as investments in its products and services. This view, looking to HRD as investment, is very similar to the prevailing view in the West and international literature on HRD and focuses on the social and economic importance of human capital theory. Torraco (2009) quoted Alfred Marshall’s comment ‘the most valuable of all capital is the invested in human beings’
From this perspective, education and training are the most important investment in human capital.

To sum up this first theme, the dominant discourse is of investment, yield, value and cost, whether expressed in explicit financial figures or more in directly in the general assumption that expenditure on training will produce a yield which is profitable to the organisation. The assumptions underlying these views are highly rationalistic and assume causal relationships between actions and outcomes. Even the participants who appeared to challenge this perspective did so more on the grounds that measurement was difficult, or that yields were not as high as expected, rather than challenging the validity of this economic rationale.

However, there were participants who recognized that in order to seek the outcomes of HRD, there is a need to make the employees satisfied and keep them within the organisation. Therefore, the second theme related to the value, significance and benefit of HRD refers to the benefits for employees in terms of maximizing their potential.

6.3.1.2 Theme II: Employee Benefit (Satisfaction and Retention)

This theme represents the reason for carrying out the HRD activities. Concern about the development of employees was expressed by almost all the participants. Some of the terms and phrases used included ‘employee satisfaction’ ‘develop employees’ skills and knowledge’ and ‘the retention of employees’. This theme describes employee satisfaction as one of the key contributory factors concerning attitudes towards organisations and jobs. It also reflects the participants' concern regarding employee satisfaction and retention, although it is linked to a later theme, in the sense that concern for employee satisfaction was related to the implications for the interest of the
organisation. As one participant pointed out, ‘We should pay attention to the employee’s satisfaction in order to make him productive’ (P9). One participant from a public agency shared his opinion on the importance of the HRD effort:

‘HRD is important for any organisation, small or big. HRD is important to develop the skills of employees and keep them up with change, especially the technicians. If we recruit new employees to operate new equipment, that will have a negative impact on the existing employees. HRD means also for me that each organisation should have its own training centre. If an organisation is concerned about its future, HRD activities should be available to everyone in the organisation. There should be an equal opportunity for all the employees at all levels of the organisation. My organisation established a separate department concerned with training and development two years ago and I was assigned to manage it. Before that, our training activity was very limited; it was an unimportant function and was operated as a function in the personnel department. This gives you an indication that the awareness of the top management has increased. My organisation failed to realize the significance of training before this time’ (P14).

HRD is perceived as a factor that could increase the satisfaction of employees and their loyalty to the organisation. It could help to secure and enhance the position of employees by ensuring their capability to keep pace with technological developments, and so perform work that would otherwise have to be done by new recruits from outside the organisation. The participant also highlighted the increased importance of HRD in his organisation in recent years, and the greater recognition it had received from top management. Such recognition had been reflected in a change to the structure of the organisation, with the establishment of a dedicated training department.

The importance of keeping employees happy and satisfied by meeting their career aspirations is captured in the following quotation, by a participant who had been educated in a western university:

‘Nowadays, most new university graduates, when they apply for a job, ask about overseas scholarships and training opportunities, because they now look at the organisation as a window of opportunity for development. In my organisation we try to provide them with these
opportunities but in return, we anticipate getting something back to the organisation. We want them to work up to our expectations’ (P8).

The above comment suggests that organisations can use HRD to align the interests of employees and organisation; HRD meets' employees needs and at the same time, makes them more useful to the organisation. A similar idea was expressed by other participants, who linked benefits to the organisation (productivity and performance) with employees' personal objectives. In both of these quotations below there is an interaction between the organisation’s needs and the individuals’ needs – they are seen as related and interacting, but distinct. As one participant said:

‘HRD is scientifically defined as the process that aims at developing human beings through providing them with knowledge, skills, abilities, changing their thinking towards the best, increasing their productivity, improving their performance, achieving their personal objectives’ (P6).

The same idea of fulfilment of organisation objectives through meeting employees' needs was expressed by the director of a T&D Department in the healthcare sector, who offered this opinion on this issue:

‘I consider HRD as a comprehensive field that aims to achieve the hospital’s objectives and satisfy the desire of employees. However, it’s very difficult to satisfy their desires properly. Therefore, we try to balance between our requirements in the organisation and the satisfaction of employees’ desires’ (P11).

These quotations imply that employees' level of satisfaction contributes to their work. Thus, managers’ concern for employees’ benefit from HRD was linked to a rationalist assumption that this in turn would benefit the organisation.

The director of a planning and development department in a leading academic institution in the kingdom made a link between job satisfaction and retention, when he raised his concern about losing employees if his organisation did not pay attention to their development. These were his words on the subject:
‘If we do not pay consideration to our employees, surely other organisations will try to attract them, so we have to take this issue seriously into consideration and show our employees how important they are to us and to the organisation by assuring their development’ (P16)

This participant expressed anxiety related to the staff shortages that could occur, given the existence of a job market that provides alternative opportunities for employees. His comments also suggest that employees have high expectations of employers and will only be attracted to and remain with organisations that meet these expectations. This participant clearly feared that employees would look for another place if they felt neglected by the organisation. Similarly, one senior HR manager described the importance of developing employees and trying to keep them within the organisation, especially in a competitive environment:

‘There is intense competition between organisations or institutions that work in the health sector so if the employees don’t satisfy their desires, they will join other organisations, not only due to the “salary factor” but also due to the career development factor. Therefore, we don’t neglect our employees in terms of developing their skills so as to achieve or perform our objectives and vision’ (P11).

Another practitioner with 22 years experience of working in the HRD field in a large ministry also asserted the role of HRD in employee retention:

‘The organisation that doesn’t invest in its employees, surely it will get a bad reputation because the employees will go away and try to join other organisations that are concerned with developing their skills, knowledge, and proficiency’ (P1).

The above statement and other similar statements indicated that public organisations value the importance of providing sufficient training and development for their employees as a way to keep them with the organisation and to maximise their use. The lack of opportunity for HRD may be perceived as a factor that increases the intention to leave the organisation in favour of one that provides better HRD opportunities.
Talking in a similar vein, P20 who had been working for 32 years in various positions summed up the view that HRD contributes to both employee development and, thereby, organisational needs, and compared the Saudi and international perspectives on this matter.

‘It is very important and necessary for public and private organisations to compete with international organisations. We should learn from western organisations; they understand and value HRD, but we (Arab Organisations) are behind in this respect.’ (P20).

This participant gained his degree outside the Kingdom, which is why he emphasised the importance of learning to value and understand HRD from the perspective of Western organisations. That is because HRD was born in the West and implemented in their organisations. He also went on to link having highly qualified employees with high productivity. For these participants HRD does not develop in a vacuum; rather it develops in response to the needs of organisations and their employees. As such it serves many purposes. For the research participants, this means that HRD contributes not only to developing the potential of individuals but also to the success of the organisation. This is in line with most of the research in the HRD which indicates that main focus of HRD activities are employees’ development and organisational development (for example, Armstrong, 2009; Abdullah, 2009a; Swanson and Holton III, 2009). The next section will discuss the theme of organisational benefit.

6.3.1.3 Theme III: Organisational Benefit

This theme was expressed indirectly by the participants in phrases such as ‘organisation success’, ‘the reputation of the organisation’, or ‘organisation goals’. The participants indicated that the success of an organisation can be achieved through improving the
skills, knowledge and abilities of its employees. A T&D director in the healthcare sector offered this opinion on this issue when he said, ‘We always make every endeavour to develop or improve the employees’ skills so as to offer distinctive services to the patients’ (P11).

One participant from a public university drew on the economic/investment discourse and emphasized the benefits of HRD for the organisation when he said:

‘Our employees are the greatest wealth that we have. Therefore, it is essential for the academic organisation’s success to have a HRD department that is able to carry out activities according to the vision and mission of the organisation. Higher education in the Kingdom is booming and the need for a qualified workforce is urgent’ (P18).

A senior HRD manager with 25 years of experience in the field of HRD emphasized the aim of developing the employees when he stated

‘We aim at developing and training the employees through concentrating on developing their skills and utilizing their potential. For those who hold low ranking positions as well as those in high positions. We aim to make all the employees contribute to our organisation’ (P7).

He continued

‘I believe that the big mistake is not utilizing human resources for the benefit of the organisation. The value of people depends on their contribution to the organisation. So we focus on the organisation by developing our people’ (P7).

This respondent qualifies the view of previous respondents (e.g. page 172) who talked in a more general way about the interaction between organisational and individual benefits and interests. He is explicit that the value of employees is not intrinsic but rather is contingent upon their contribution to the organisation.

This participant raised the issue of making HRD activities available to all levels of employees in order to make them contribute to the organisation. He also criticized the organisation for not being able to put people to better use for the organisation. However,
he linked the development of employees’ skills with an increase in their contribution to the organisation.

This view is elaborated in the two quotations cited below. The first one is from the general manager of planning and organisational development in a large ministry and the second one is from the director of a planning and development department in an academic organisation. Both participants explained their perception of HRD as a means of tailoring employees' skills precisely to the demands of the job:

‘HRD aims at developing the employees’ administrative skills in general and training them in gaining new concepts about some tasks and functions that the employee should learn in order to enable themselves to perform some tasks or responsibilities that don’t have any relation to their education or qualification. Because most of the time the employees do a job which has no relationship to their academic degree. This is the case for all the public employees. Anyway, the training session is considered as a base of his understanding about his job and the sector that he is going to’ (P5).

‘From my point of view, the definition of HRD is a series of processes that start from advertising and announcing for recruitment. Our recruitment plan is the basic element of the HRD chain because T&D is considered in it. That is because it never happens that newly recruited staff fit the job, always they need training to fill the gap. Usually, in our plan, we try to attract new university graduates, and as you know, those are not expected to fit a specific job in the [organisation] and need a T&D programme in order to be familiar with their jobs. Therefore, we define HRD as continuous process towards gaining or obtaining appropriate preparation and qualifications for both new recruits who require more training and preparation and old ones. So the process of HRD starts from the first day someone joins the [organisation].’ (P16).

Both participants raised a very important issue regarding the use of HRD in its an attempt to fill a gap in skills, which has arisen because, as they stated, there is no relationship between what employees learn in their academic institutions and the job they are holding. The issue of the mismatch between educational outcomes and market needs and the failure to prepare the students to enter the labour market has been
repeatedly raised since the 1990s. Therefore, there is a demand to train these graduates to be more qualified to work in private and public organisations and the HRD efforts aim to fill the gap between theory and practice.

Both these respondents clearly saw a need for practice – based or practical (on-the-job) learning and perceived a distinction between this and university learning. While the latter provided a general theoretical foundation, on-the-job training was considered necessary to develop job or task-specific skills. Training was also seen to have a vital role in framing the expectations of employees, a process that began from their first day in the organisation.

From the above quotations it is clear that the emphasis is on developing employees not for their own sake, but to maximize their contribution to the organisation. Also, there is a requirement for new employees to acquire certain qualities that are organisation-specific in order to address their “newness” to any organisational context. Some participants were of the opinion that this approach to teaching the requisite skills and knowledge was the most helpful way of giving employees an overview of organisational operations. Ultimately the aim is to ensure that they can work at an optimum level of efficiency. Consequently HRD activities are seen as a continuum of individual development.

The view that the goal of HRD is to fill the skills gap is evident in this quotation:

‘For me, there is a goal for HRD it is to improve knowledge, skill and attitude. So, it is to fill the gap of skills in order to enhance capability. That is why I said it is long term investment. We depend on our human resources to make our organisation successful. We buy new and advanced technology but we can’t always recruit knowledgeable people’ (P13)
The above comment reflects how this practitioner viewed HRD as a tool for enhancing the skills and capabilities of employees. He used the word ‘buy’ in relation to obtaining advanced technology (machines) but when referring to people he used the word ‘recruit’. Another practitioner made a similar distinction between human and material resources when he pointed out that ‘HR should be given consideration because they are not like machines and even machines require maintenance to keep working and to lengthen their useful life’ (P8).

From the above comments it is clear that in the participants’ view there is a link between the skills and abilities of employees and organisational success. They also show that the empowerment of employees impacts on organisational success. Most of the participants assume that there is a link between individual development and organisational capacity.

The themes of employee and organisational benefit overlap. When some participants were asked whether the organisation or the employee should have priority, the majority preferred not to express a preference. They viewed both the organisation and the employees as important. One of the participants answered immediately to reject the idea of a priority when he said, ‘For sure, it’s both the organisation and employees; the effort should be for both’ (P9). Another participant said to the researcher with smile, ‘There is no organisation without employees’ (P7). Another participant showed that he shared this idea when he stated:

‘This is not a choice. Both the organisation and the employees are very important. But I can say that employees are the organisation’s tool to achieve its objectives and HRD is the organisation’s tool to develop its employees’ (P1).
This notion was confirmed by another participant, who shared this view:

‘To me, the HRD field is about how to meet and satisfy the training needs of the employees; this is one thing. The second thing is to meet and satisfy the needs of the organisation, because the organisation relies on the employees and benefits from them to develop and compete.....I see the HRD function in my organisation as a bridge between employees and organisation. Therefore, our efforts in the department serve two main things: the employees and the organisation and that will give us in the long term an excellent job’ (P17).

The first expression indicates that meeting and satisfying the training needs of the employees will ensure that the needs of the organisation are met. The interviewee described how management (the organisation) relies on its employees to develop and to be successful.

The metaphor of a ‘bridge’ is used to describe his view of the role HRD plays in his organisation: it forms a link between the employees and getting excellent work for the organisation. The result is a positive outcome for both sides because when the employees are given the attention that they deserve, they will reciprocate by doing an excellent job and providing good quality customer services.

The relationship between organisational benefit and benefit to employees was also emphasised in the response from one participant who used two powerful but contrasting metaphors to describe the relationship between organisation and employees: the first metaphor is that of a machine and the second is that of a human:

‘In my opinion the organisation is just like a human body, each one of its organs has a specific function and they are complementary to another. Consequently, when a junior employee feels that he is not valued, that means there is a problem. Also this function is similar to that performed by the "screw" which has a specific function in the car’s body, so if it comes loose, that will impact on the car as a whole. Regarding our employees, if one of them feels undervalued, he will not continue in his job and may leave because he is extra and there is no need for him because he is no longer valuable to us’ (P7).
The use of the metaphor of the ‘human body’ to describe the functioning of the organisation is interesting as it views the organisation as analogous to a living organism, in which each part is integral to the efficient functioning of the overall unit. If an organisation is to achieve its mission successfully it must aim at achieving this complementary relation between its separate parts. He also goes on to use another interesting metaphor, that of a ‘screw’ in the ‘car’s body’ to describe the function and role of employee in the organisation. If an employee is not doing his job properly he will impact negatively on the organisation as a whole. This metaphor is a way of describing how this senior HRD specialist views the employees in the organisation. For example, a ‘screw’ is often used to make things stable and strong, it suggests a way of connecting things or holding things together. Screws perform a vitally important function in the body of the car and if one comes loose or breaks, then the safety of the car and the passengers are at risk. This reflects how this participant valued the role of his employees in the organisation.

A number of participants linked learning and performance when they suggested that it was important for employees to learn creative thinking and to be proactive in terms of planning. Also employees needed to develop leadership skills and team working skills. Additionally the participants emphasised the importance of developing the cognitive abilities of their workers, as this was a prerequisite for acquiring practical knowledge and effective management skills. A participant for whom HRD efforts contributed to the reputation and effectiveness of the organisation made the following remark:

‘We have 4500 employees and we deal with various problems every day. Therefore, HRD means to develop employees’ communication skills, ability to think creatively and to solve problems that may occur. I want to see my employees have some skills of leadership, team working, co-ordination and cooperation. The reputation and the effectiveness of any
organisation depend on the nature of its employees. My organisation is engaged in many committees in the Riyadh region, so these skills are very important’ (P20).

If employees are able to acquire higher level cognitive skills such as these, then they will be equipped with the foresight and knowledge to think creatively and independently about any problems that might occur. Ultimately this will enhance both the reputation and the effectiveness of the organisation because its workforce will be thinking not only about the reputation of the organisation but also about its future and their own future career development.

The above reflections reinforce the point that many skills are required for employees to participate effectively in the activities of the organisation and to enhance its reputation.

A senior director of a planning and development department, although he was in agreement with the importance of T&D efforts for the success of the organisation, mentioned that in order to make T&D effective, the organisation needed to pay attention to other factors. In his words:

‘...I have to mention that training and development doesn’t represent the sole key to success but there are other essential elements that contribute to the development of any organisation besides the organisation’s mission and organisational structure. Thus, it is very necessary to make plans that include the objectives that you aim to achieve after 10 years, regarding the employees’ training requirements’ (P23).

The above comment raises a new view, a temporal conception of the work. This speaker acknowledged that the T&D effort is not the only key to organisational success. His statement makes the point that organisations need long-term planning and therefore T&D activities need to be linked to the organisational structure and future aims of the organisation. Thus an integrated long-term approach to T&D will ultimately enhance the strength of the organisation.
To summarize this theme, participants explicitly linked HRD to organisational performance and success. Employees were seen to have value only to the extent that they contribute to the organisation, HRD, by framing expectations, developing job-specific practical knowledge, and enhancing creative and problem-solving ability, helps to maximize this contribution, ideally as part of an overall organisational strategy. This is also similar to the argument made by many researchers that employees and organisational development are connected and interrelated (see for example, Armstrong, 2009; Swanson and Holton III, 2009; Abdullah, 2009a).

Although participants’ focus, as expressed through themes I-III, was primarily on the organisation, there were also some responses that reflected a broader perspective, viewing the organisation within the wider social context. Such responses constitute the fourth theme, discussed next.

### 6.3.1.4 Theme IV: Social/ Community Benefit

This theme focuses on the ways in which HRD efforts can fulfil an obligation to society by equipping public employees with the skills and knowledge to enhance their own lives and to meet their individual needs. This will ensure that the whole country reaps the benefits of these investments. Some participants emphasised that organisations have a social responsibility to improve the quality of life of their employees in order to contribute to the well-being of family, community and society. To emphasise this idea, one experienced participant said, ‘HRD cannot be confined to employees and the organisation only, but there is another important aspect which is represented in developing the society as a whole’ (P1). Later he came back to reinforce this notion when he said
An OD general manager viewed HRD efforts as a way to contribute at an individual level by helping people to cope with their changing environment. He explained it as follows:

‘HRD, in my view, it is to improve the employees’ skills, knowledge and their way of communication to be able to deal with a changing environment; this is on the individual level. For the organisational level, people are the power of organisation to move it ahead. Therefore, the organisation provides them with opportunities to learn, train and develop. Trained and developed human resources are the key to organisational success and training gives the employees skills for life’ (P22).

In the same vein, a director of Training and Development in one of the economic agencies saw HRD as contributing to beneficial outcomes on multiple levels:

‘The HRD concept is a continuous process of increasing the capabilities of employees, organisations, groups and society through providing them with the knowledge and development to achieve the employees’, organisations’ and society’s goals’ (P21).

The above participant views the concept of HRD as a continuous process of developing and improving the employees. He agrees that the public organisation has a duty to promote development in its employees and in society. Therefore, when employees get the right development, they are willing and able to contribute to the overall success of the organisation and the society. That is because this interviewee views the organisation as a part of society and as such there is an interrelation between society, employees and organisation. An OD General Director expressed the opinion that public organisations have a social responsibility to provide the Saudi people with opportunities for advancement. He made the following comment:
'We understand that we are a public organisation and have a social obligation towards the Saudi people, to improve and enhance their qualifications in order to upgrade and empower them as citizens. Therefore, we have to accept the fact that these employees may leave us for another organisation, as the aim is to improve the quality of the national organisations, whether in the public or private sector’ (P8).

This is an important point. Furthermore, several participants mentioned their recognition of employees as ‘human beings’. One HRD manager with 25 years of experience described HRD as encompassing three parts. He put it this way:

‘The terminology of HRD consists three parts: Human, Resources, and Development. So we add a ‘human touch’ because we are not machines, but we are human beings, so this has ‘value’ for employees’ (P7).

In the above quotation, the underlying assumption is that employees are “human beings” and “not machines”. This manager supplied an interesting description when he used the terms ‘human touch’ and ‘human being’ to show the value of employees as social actors and to distinguish them from machines. In his view the HRD efforts of an organisation are intended not only to develop and improve the potential of employees but also to reinforce some human values in their human resources for the benefit of society, so there is a dual responsibility.

Another senior director of Training and Scholarship from an academic organisation made clear his view of the importance of HRD not only for organisations but also for the whole country when he said:

‘...it is essential for the academic organisation’s success to have an HRD department that is able to carry out activities according to the vision and mission of the organisation. Higher education in the Kingdom is booming and the need for a qualified workforce is urgent. The number of universities in the Kingdom has jumped from 8 to 20 and the number will increase. Almost 75per cent of the university’s academic staff are foreigners. The development of human resources is vital for the government. Human resources will move the country and its organisations towards being more competitive’ (P18).
The above reflection refers indirectly to the concept of ‘Saudization’, especially in higher education, with the increase in the number of public universities from 8 to 20 in a very short period. The concept of ‘Saudization’ has been introduced by the government as a strategic approach to reduce the number of non-Saudi workers in the Kingdom by developing local human resources to replace them. This participant concludes his comment by emphasizing his belief that the country and its organisations must rely on human resources in order to become more competitive. The notion of Saudization was also mentioned by a senior manager of the training department in one of the largest organisations in the Kingdom employing over nine thousand personnel. This manager shared with the researcher the idea that HRD efforts in his organisation have an impact on the level of Saudization. He said:

‘Preparation of employees is very important in our organisation because it links to our corporate strategies. In addition to that, they are considered as necessary programmes and assist in implementing the programmes of Saudization (nationalization) of the workforce. We have noticed that training programmes have made a direct impact on Saudization and increase of Saudization programmes in the organisation’ (P13).

The above quotation, together with the previous view, is consistent with the government’s heavy investment in education and training. The Saudi government believes that investment in human capital is the key to the country’s economic growth and to reducing dependence on foreign workers (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010a).

Another example of how HRD can contribute to the well-being of community and society was expressed by one participant when he called for training programmes, not only to prepare employees for work, but also to ease the transition to retirement. He said
'We should pay attention not only to new employees, but also to those who are close to their retirement age. We should provide them with development programmes to be ready and prepared for their retirement. The Ministry of Civil Service and the IPA should create an HRD programme to deal with life after retirement. Developing employees should be a continuing process, from the first step in the workplace to the last step when they leave it' (P1).

The above reflection draws attention to the important issue of lifelong learning. This participant regards the development of employees as a continuing process that begins when they start a job and continues until they leave the organisation. He perceives a social responsibility to provide programmes intended to help employees to deal with life after retirement, and views HRD as involved in development at all stages of the employee’s life. A similar view was expressed by an HR expert and HRD manager as follows:

‘HRD is a continual, dynamic and always changing process that all members of [the organisation] should be involved in until they retire from their work. So it is a dynamic and continual process’ (P16).

Such comments appear to contradict those cited previously, in which rational economic considerations prevailed and personal interest was subordinated to organisational needs. For some participants, this social responsibility perspective seemed to imply that HRD efforts are not work or job-related. However, if an organisation demonstrates social responsibility, then this has a positive impact on its reputation. Hence, themes are interrelated; however, the organisation’s benefit is primarily what organisations aim to reach in order to provide a good quality of service and achieve their goal and mission. A new level of analysis, therefore, concerns the explication of the specific goals and purposes participants expected to be achieved through HRD.
6.3.2 Dimension II: Goal and Purpose for HRD

In this category, the HRD concept can be examined by looking at the objectives that HRD efforts aim to accomplish or the outputs that are expected from HRD efforts. Based on the answers from participants the researcher concluded that the goal of HRD was to develop and improve employee performance in order to achieve the organisational mission and in so doing enable them to deal with the external environment. Therefore, two themes emerged from the participants' responses:

1. Improving Performance
2. Facilitating Changes

6.3.2.1 Theme I: Improving Performance

The main idea of this theme is improving the performance of employees in order to contribute to the benefit of the organisation and to fulfilling the demand of the organisation for qualified employees. Many researchers argued that an increasing number of organisations regard HRD as a crucial factor contributes to overall performance, (for example, Erasmus etal., 2010; Adhikari, 2010). Therefore the HRD effort can target the individual in order to develop the organisation. Participants used terms like ‘improve employees’ productivity’, and ‘improve the job performance of the employees’. Also, some participants used terms such as ‘to work effectively’ and ‘to do the work better’. A manager of an OD department emphasised this idea when he said ‘HRD means to enable employees to gain skills and knowledge in order to achieve high quality performance through a high quality of training and learning’ (P14). Another participant made a similar point:
‘We should know that outcomes are very important because our mission as a developer is not to develop for the sake of it; it is to develop to improve productivity and performance’ (P16).

This participant viewed his primary role as that of a facilitator tasked with providing training and development to the employees with the aim of enhancing their capabilities.

Another participant, in one of the largest ministries in the Kingdom, shared his perception that HRD is concerned with improving performance when he said:

‘Yes, HRD efforts are used to help organisation to improve the job performance of the employees.) .....Both to do well in their current jobs and to be ready for future jobs’ (P5).

This participant emphasised that the aim of developing employees is to meet not only present but also future work demands of the organisation and prepare them for future responsibility.

Another participant, an Organisational Development director in a public university, who similarly viewed HRD as important in terms of improving the job performance of employees, went on to draw inferences regarding responsibility for HRD. He stated

‘HRD is very important to increase the ability of employees and improve both work & their performance through sending them to attend training and developmental programmes. Therefore, HRD is important to any organisation and the function of HRD is the responsibility of all the organisation departments and units, not only the administrative development department. Attention should be paid to HRD by everyone in the organisation’ (P10).

This participant looks at HRD efforts to provide employees with the skills necessary for improving their own work performance. He goes on to emphasise that the HRD function is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation. Therefore the successes and failures of HRD efforts are the responsibility of everyone. An OD manager in local government shared his views on the importance of all departments in the organisation participating in the HRD efforts in order to enhance success. These are his words:
‘Well, HRD’s main goal is to improve the skills, knowledge and productivity of employees. Therefore, the success of our function is dependent on all departments in the organisation. To obtain the maximum from the employees, we need the organisational units to cooperate with us in order to achieve excellent work’ (P19).

Another participant in the same venue also shared his view on the important role played by the line manager when implementing HRD efforts in the organisation. He said

‘I look at HRD as behavioural, technical, and administrative skills. Above all, it is an investment in HR that aims to increase productivity. Thus, HR includes knowledge, skills, and abilities. Our problem with the line managers is that they are not cooperative due to their misconception of training values. They think that training and development is a chance for promotion and not a tool to improve employees’ effectiveness’ (P9).

This participant agreed that HRD efforts should impact on the behaviour, job performance and work ethic of employees. Another planning and development manager mentioned two main objectives of the HRD effort: ‘1. Behavioural objective; 2. Performance objective. If there is no performance objective there should at least be an impact on behaviour and work ethic’ (P16). When asked about the role and purpose of the HRD function in his organisation, an experienced director in the field of HRD shared his view with the researcher as follows

‘To implement this concept we need a lot of resources and effort. For us (in my organisation) the HRD purpose is to upgrade our employees to perform their work effectively through training inside the Kingdom or outside the Kingdom. Also, through scholarships, to study inside and outside of the Kingdom. Moreover learning English language and computer skills. What we do is training and learning’ (P21).

The above participant emphasised that the HRD effort aims to provide training and learning to employees. He indicated that implementing the role of HRD and realising its purpose required effort and a lot of resources.
Many participants emphasised that HRD aims at developing and improving the skills and behaviour of employees. A participant with 23 years of experience in the field of HRD offered more details about the behavioural aspect:

‘HRD is developing the skills and behaviour of employees. We develop the skills of junior employees when we move them to other departments so as to enable them to gain experience. Regarding behaviour, we give consideration to some issues such as punctuality and regulation or issues that are related to their behaviour. I believe that the problem isn’t related to improving or developing the skills of employees, whether in this corporation or other organisations of the public sector in K.S.A but the problem is linked with behavioural aspects. Therefore we require a training programme called ‘Positive work attitude’ (P4).

From the above quotation, it seems as though the development of employee skills is very important; however the above participant also emphasises that it is equally as important to focus on improving behaviour amongst employees, and he saw a need for a specific training programme for public employees to address this issue.

The increase of the level of performance in the organisation was the concern of most of the participants, as reflected in this definition of HRD given by the Training and Scholarship manager in one of the big ministries:

‘Development of the work forces by adopting programmes of training and development through the identification of employees’ strength and weaknesses and also aims at the development of employee’s work ethics in order to improve and develop the level of performance’ (P9).

### 6.3.2.2 Theme II: Facilitating Changes

Several participants raised the idea that HRD assists organisations and employees to drive forward changes for the achievement of organisational goals. These participants see their central role as facilitators for change. An OD manager acknowledged the importance of developing organisational strategies for dealing with change. He said
‘HRD concentrates on developing the abilities of employees in order to keep pace with changes in different fields’ (P8). This participant pointed out that the HRD effort aims to increase the ability of employees to deal with changes in different fields; also, to deal with changes inside and outside the organisation. This is because the participant believes that organisations are dynamic and changing; consequently employees need to be equipped to cope with changes in the external environment. A manpower development manager shared a similar perspective when he aired his views on HRD. He explained that HRD efforts should play a role in changing the mentality of employees. He noted that

‘HRD is to change employees’ mentality and their thinking towards the best so as to improve their productivity. Therefore, the main objective is to make change. Change to their mentality as well as to their clothes to be very smart’ (P1).

He offered a further explanation by adding

‘If we want to make change we have to develop our employees so as to let them change their mentality, because the work itself is changeable. And the nature of organisation is dynamic. Consequently, if the employees change their mentality and attitudes, the organisation will be changed for the better....HRD is considered as a basis for change’ (P1).

This comment recalls the emphasis previously given to HRD as a means of framing expectations; just as it can be used for this purpose in the induction stage, so it can also be used to frame expectations as part of a change initiative, at any stage in the employee’s career.

The comments quoted above illustrate that this participant viewed changing people rather than organisations as the aim of HRD. He emphasised the importance of changing the thinking of employees in order to drive work progress. This participant also emphasised that changing the attitudes of employees will also be reflected in changes to their physical appearance. If they think professionally then this change in
attitude will be reflected in their appearance. Hence, employees will dress in a way that reflects their professionalism. Another participant viewed HRD as the ability of the employees to deal with changes in the work requirements and new technology. He said:

‘With respect to the scientific concept of HR, I can define HRD as the harmonization of people's abilities with the technological equipment or tools and the procedures of work which aim at achieving the objectives of the organisation’ (P3).

A prestigious director of a T&D department in the health care sector described his view of his department as facilitator in the following comment:

‘My way of looking at the T&D department’s main function and mission is to facilitate training and develop the organisation’s employees to improve their skills and obtain new skills and that will contribute not only for the employees but also for the organisation’ (P11).

In summary, organisations must develop their employees in order to keep pace with rapidly accelerating change. Change is a key factor driving HRD efforts and this powers organisational dynamism. A key finding emerging from the above is that organisations are dynamic entities; this means that when people develop to keep pace with change, this development will be reflected in positive change within the organisation. Consequently, organisations must nurture their employees and ensure that they are equipped to deal with challenging issues as they arise. The assumption in this theme is that the need of the HRD is to make the organisation able to deal with changes in the environment. This is in line with Armstrong (2009) argument that learning and development activities support the achievement of the organisation’s goals now and in the future.

Participants used terms related to the concept of OD such as ‘organisation development’ and ‘facilitating change’. Therefore, the researcher asked the participants whether they viewed OD as a part of HRD. A local government OD manager from local government
gave a brief outline of his understanding of both concepts. In his view they comprised two distinctly separate but equally important organisational functions, as he makes clear in the following comment:

‘In my understanding, I don’t see that organisational development is part of HRD because HRD is about developing people and OD is about developing organisations. Both are important but they are not connected with each other’ (P19).

Another director of OD offered an alternative view when he described the OD concept as an umbrella. He said:

‘I think the concept of OD is comprehensive, so HRD is part of this concept. In Saudi public organisations we have OD departments, but they mainly practise training and sometimes participate in reorganising the organisational departments or units. We in the Saudi organisation still practise the traditional kind of OD. This aspect of OD is really not given a full attention. Most OD managers don’t have a degree in OD or HRD. These managers still think that OD is not related to HRD. There should be more attention given to OD in Saudi public organisations’ (P8).

From the viewpoint of the second speaker the two fields are interrelated. Here OD is the overarching concept with HRD as a subsidiary part. When asked how he saw the difference between HRD and OD concepts, another general director of organisational development immediately replied with a smile:

‘Well, the OD practices, we borrowed this term from the west in the 1990s and we were not ready to implement it. It is very attractive to have it but our public organisations were not ready in terms of staff or facilities to implement this term. For me I see OD as a broader concept than HRD. OD includes HRD interventions and looks at the organisation as a whole, which includes people, systems, processes and future direction’ (P20).

In both the second and third quotations the OD concept is really an umbrella term that covers HRD interventions. Both of these participants were of the opinion that OD is the main function and HRD is a part of that function. This emphasis on OD may be the result of earlier government reforms. In 1990, the Higher Committee for Administrative
Reform decreed that all government agencies must establish a department of organisation development within their structure in order to improve the performance of these agencies. Among these department duties was the obligation to practise the HRD activities. This would explain why the above reflections classify OD as the main function with HRD as a supporting or complimentary function.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings and discussion of participants' comments related to research question 1, concerning participants' conceptualization of HRD. The comments were presented in two dimensions - Significance and Value of HRD, and Goal and Purpose for HRD - each encompassing a number of themes.

Regarding the first dimension, four themes were identified: economic/financial benefit, employee benefit (satisfaction and retention); organisation benefit and social/community benefit. Employees were seen as part of the wealth or capital of an organisation, requiring investment in order to generate a return, although this raised difficult issues as to whether or how such return could be quantified and recognized. Investment in employee development was also seen as a way of aligning employee and organisational interests; meeting employees' needs and aspirations was potentially a way of increasing their satisfaction in order to retain them in the organisation. The organisation would also benefit by having employees equipped for specific jobs; HRD was seen as a way of addressing the skills gap between education (theoretical knowledge) and work requirements (practical knowledge). Finally, by developing employees, organisations sought to improve the quality of family and community life,
enhance their reputation, and contribute to government social policies such as Saudization.

In relation to the second dimension, two themes emerged: improving work performance and facilitating change. The first theme focuses on organisations’ concern to enhance employees' productivity and performance in their current jobs and prepare them for future responsibility. Such is the importance of this role, that it was seen as a responsibility of all departments and levels of the organisation, not just HRD. The second theme saw HRD as a way of enabling organisations to keep pace with a dynamic environment, for example, changes in technology. In this respect, HRD was seen as a subset of OD, and a number of participants elaborated on the relationship and distinction between these concepts.

This chapter has examined the first research question, concerned with the basic perception of HRD in the organisation. The next chapter will discuss participants' views regarding the second question, concerned with how HRD is actually practised in Saudi public organisations.
CHAPTER SEVEN: RESEARCH QUESTION II: WHAT SYSTEMS, PROCESSES AND APPROACHES ARE USED TO PURSUE HRD IN THE SAUDI PUBLIC SECTOR?

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings related to research question two regarding the systems, processes and approaches of HRD as perceived by Saudi HRD practitioners in Saudi public organisations. Responses presented a picture of a lively, contested space in which interviewees were struggling to create and enact a strategic role, often in the face of structural and cultural obstacles.

The chapter will therefore begin by analysing the structure of HRD in public organisations, including reporting structures and staffing. It then explores perceptions of the current status of the HRD profession in Saudi Arabia, before examining the activities actually performed.

7.2 Department structure of HRD

The structure of the HRD/T&D department is very important because it gives an indication of the extent to which the department participates in organisational strategy making. In addition, the structure of an HRD department indicates what level of value is placed on HRD activities by top management. The management and implementation of HRD activities depend on the structure of the HRD department. It is argued that HRD should be in direct contact with top management rather than communicating via a proxy department. This relationship is vital in that it ensures the support and commitment from top management towards its HRD department (Abdullah, 2009b).
In 1990, the Saudi government acting through the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform (HCAR) declared their decision to establish separate departments within Saudi public organisations. These departments were intended for the purpose of carrying out HRD functions in order to help organisations to achieve their goals. This decision reflects the government belief that having a separate department to practise HRD is more efficient because it is difficult to practise HRD activities without a separate department. The HCAR recommended that public organisations call these departments OD departments. Therefore, most of the public organisations give these departments the label of OD. However others vary, from the traditional “Training”, “Training and Scholarship” “Training and Development” and “Planning and Development” to the more recent “HRD Departments”. This variety was reflected in the questionnaire survey findings, where almost half the participating organisations labelled these departments as the OD department, while the remainder used one or other of the variants reported above. Also, five organisations practised HRD as a function within the Administration and Finance Affairs or Personnel departments. Interestingly, only three public organisations labelled these departments as HRD. In contrast, Abdullah (2009b) found in her empirical study of 365 Malaysian companies that 18.2 per cent labelled these departments as the HRD department or unit, more than fifty per cent called them Training and T&D and 15.9 per cent gave their units names such as Learning and Development, while a few, 6.8 per cent, called them the Employee Development and Talent Development.

The HCAR decision did not specify any particular administrative level for these departments within the organisational structure. The decision about whether to locate these departments at high, middle or low management level was left to the public
organisations themselves based on their size. However the HCAR recommends that these departments should report to top management. This recommendation might have arisen because during the 1990s the government emphasis on HRD initiatives began to affect public organisations. HRD practitioners viewed as very important the establishment of a separate department or unit to carry out HRD activities. Many authors have argued that having a separate unit or department for HRD is an important decision for any organisation; this is especially the case in medium and large organisations, in order to meet their HRD needs and improve the effectiveness of the function (for example, Budwar et al, 2002; Huang, 2001; Abdullah, 2009b).

The strategic position of HRD departments has an influence on the culture of T&D within the organisation. Also the status of the HRD department influences its share of the organisational budget as a whole. In this study, the majority of participants categorized the status of their department as directorate or directorate general. This indicates that the majority of the participants were at middle management level. Also, many participants mentioned that their departments have subunits such as training, scholarship and development.

One participant who had worked for more than 20 years in the field of training and development explained the establishment of his department and its structure with the following comments:

‘The Department of Organisational Development was founded in 1990 in accordance with the decision of the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform, which aims at founding organisational development units or departments in government organisations. These units or departments are in charge of organizing, developing, and training the manpower in the organisation.

In the past, the personnel department was responsible for training employees, and it did not follow a scientific method of training. Also, the
philosophy was that training should be conducted by an independent department so as to develop the skills of employees in order to increase their productivity and efficiency.

We have three units: one the training unit; two the scholarship unit and three the organising unit’ (P8).

From the above comment, it is clear that choice of structure reflects the organisation’s thinking about the nature of HRD. In the organisation in question, the change of structure was associated with the aim of promoting a more ‘scientific’ approach to training. The respondent also raises an interesting issue about the desirability of independence. Interestingly, the majority of participants indicated that one of their sub-units was a scholarship unit. That is because the government of Saudi Arabia encourages the award of scholarships to enable employees to pursue degrees abroad.

These findings are similar to those of Budwar et al. (2002) who conducted a study about Human Resource development in the Sultanate of Oman. They found that most companies in Oman have a separate HR department with sub units responsible for carrying out different types of activities. Budwar et al. see this as part of a wider move toward strategic HR practices in Oman, and a reflection of the increasing importance to HR within the organisation. In Saudi public organisations, the structure of HRD departments is influenced by several factors. These factors include the organisational structure of top management, the organisational culture and the political and economic strategy of the government. The location of the HRD department within the organisational structure is significant because it determines the reporting structures. The following section will discuss the reporting structure of the HRD department.
7.2.1 Reporting Structure of HRD department

As previously mentioned, the majority of participants indicated that their departments were at the status level of middle management. However, the reporting structure is very important because it gives an indication of the extent to which the person in charge of an HRD department is able to play an active role in the strategy-making of the organisation. In this study the majority of participants reported to top management at Ministerial Level consistent with the questionnaire responses, where two thirds of respondents indicated that they reported to the ministry level. This level of reporting gave them the advantage of participating in important decisions, attending important meetings and having direct contact with the top management of a public organisation.

An OD director in one of the largest public sector organisations employing around two thousand personnel explained the advantages of direct reporting to the CEO.

‘We work under the control of His Excellency the CEO. This direct reporting to the CEO has advantages because decisions can be made quickly’. (P8).

The above comment illustrates that direct access to the CEO and top management helps to ensure support and commitment in terms of funding and getting decisions approved.

Another OD manager in a middle-sized public agency employing 500 employees described the support of top management in this way:

‘His Excellency the president of my organisation pays attention to and supports training and development. Therefore when he gained his position as president, he founded an independent department concerned with training and development within the organisation to work under his direct supervision. This is considered as giving evidence of consideration to training and development activities’ (P 14).

This respondent, like P.8 quoted previously, clearly saw the establishment of a separate, independent department as significant, illustrating the importance to actors of structures as key points of reference. The reporting structure gives the HRD department a level of
power and commitment in relation to employee development. This finding is consistent with the literature that highlights the importance of top management support and involvement (Garavan, 1991; McCraken and Wallace, 2000). As these comments show, reporting structures have not only practical importance in terms of decision-making, but also symbolic significance, since they are perceived by local actors as indicators of the status and importance of particular functions. Reporting to the top level not only facilitated procedures but also signalled to HRD staff the organisations’ prioritization of employee development, consistent with the idea of investment in human capital, discussed previously.

A few participants reported to middle-management, for example to the General Director of Administration and Finance; in the questionnaire responses, just over a fifth of respondents reported such a situation. In this structure, the HRD function is seen as a sub-unit or sub-division of Administration and Finance. One head of department in this position expressed his desire to report to top management rather than Administration and Finance when he said, ‘We should have a higher management level and report to the top management in order to gain the necessary support’ (P2). This comment, like those quoted above, again illustrates the practical and symbolic value of reporting structures in the eyes of participants. The findings in relation to reporting structures are similar to those of Abdullah (2009b) in Malaysian manufacturing firms. She found it was common to report to the CEO and GM, a practice observed in 41 per cent of the 365 participating manufacturers, while 45.4 per cent of her sample reported to the HR director. The remaining 13.6 per cent indicated that they reported to the Board of Directors and the HR manager.
In some cases, the organisational structure contained a special committee for training and development. Indeed, this was common practice in Saudi public organisations. Typically, from participants’ comments (e.g. P1, P16) such committees consisted of a small number of senior managers and was tasked with approving annual training plans and arrangements related to the award of overseas scholarships. These committees work in close liaison with the HRD department, or its equivalent, and their main role is to ensure that T&D activities are well planned and monitored.

Such committees could be seen as central to the organisational planning structure because they respond to the needs of all departments and branches as well as paying attention to the future direction of the organisation as a whole. On the other hand integrating these committees into public organisations could be seen as complicating the structure by necessitating drawn-out procedures and decision-making processes. However, in the opinion of this researcher, the perceived need for a central committee within the organisation, to plan and monitor T&D activities, is a response to the lack of HRD specialists in the departments responsible for HRD activities. The issue of HR staff qualifications will be discussed further in the following section.

7.2.2 Staff of HRD department

The number of staff and their levels of qualification are important factors that determine whether or not an HRD department will be able to meet its departmental responsibilities. The findings revealed that the majority of participants were unhappy with their existing staff in terms of numbers and/or qualifications. Some respondents viewed the number of staff as sufficient but their qualifications as inadequate. A manpower development manager in one of the largest ministries in the Kingdom, as
someone working in the same ministry for over two decades, made the following statement: ‘We have 16[HRD] employees. This number is good in total but they are not competent to carry out our functions due to their qualifications’ (P 1).

Indeed, the findings from the questionnaire data revealed that the majority (more than 54 per cent) of organisations had fewer than seven HR staff. However, some organisations (around 15 per cent) had more than 20 members of staff to perform their HRD functions. Large numbers of HRD staff such as these were found in the big ministries and in the large public organisations which employ internal trainers and specialist technical trainers (e.g. health care and electrical industries).

However, most of the HRD managers interviewed declared that there was a lack of specialist experts and insufficient staff to carry out HRD activities. One manager of a Planning and Development Department described how Saudi public organisations handled HRD activities as follows:

‘The public sector isn’t concerned with HRD due to the lack of competent employees who can perform this task; you can find two or three employees in the public sector who are in charge of performing the training but they don’t know the objective of HRD (P3).

In the same vein a Manpower Development Manager in one of the public agencies expressed his disappointment at having insufficient staff in the following comment:

‘The number of employees is 13 so it is insufficient for carrying out administrative tasks, which means they are unqualified to perform their responsibilities as required. We find that 60 per cent of them add nothing to the work. So, they make no difference if they are in or out’ (P4).

From the above quotations, it is clear that HR departments suffer from poor quality staff without the abilities required to carry out HRD functions. These functions include the
systematic determination of training needs; the implementation of the HRD plan and the evaluation of the HRD functions. This is a common problem facing public organisations in Saudi Arabia. The lack of qualified HRD staff within the public organisations can be explained by the fact that Saudi universities do not have programmes for HRM. Therefore those who obtain degrees from outside the Kingdom are in high demand and often choose to work in the private sector.

This was noted by an OD manager when he stated:

‘There aren't any specialized departments of HRM in our universities due to the neglect of HRM in our universities. K.S.A is in a booming stage and there is a need for HRD so as to cope with these changes in different fields of life’ (P8).

Another participant with 24 years of experience in the field of T&D also raised concerns about the lack of training or support for HRD in the quotation below:

‘We [in Saudi Arabia] have no universities, amongst 20 universities, that offer a degree or a certificate in training and human resource management/ development. I think this is a short-sighted view on the part of our universities and IPA. How can we expect our public or private organisations to be competitive without knowing the principles of HRD/M? Those who work in the field of HRD should know about labour relations, organisational development, organisational behaviour and the philosophy and processes of HR in order to carry out the development of human resources. I can assure you that the majority of people working in the field of HRD and T&D in the public and private organisations in the Kingdom do not have a degree in HRD/HRM’ (P11).

The above participant pointed out the lack of HRD professionals in Saudi Arabia. Also, the same participant shared with the researcher his experience in his department and his effort to recruit HRM specialists. In his words:

‘We have 18 employees who serve 4000 employees but unfortunately there is no HRD specialist among them, so if you know one of your colleagues, especially someone specialized in HRD, we are ready to recruit him. I have been looking for a specialist in the field but have been unable to find any. I tried to contact Saudi students abroad but unfortunately I was not successful. I need your help in this matter’ (P11).
The level of frustration expressed by this respondent seems to typify the situation facing many developing countries. For example, in her work on HRM in Pakistan, Khilji (2001) concluded that there is insufficient training in the field of HRM. Also in Turkey, Aycan (2006) reported that only eight out of 77 universities offer HRM training. Such a lack of specialist education and training could be seen as both a reflection of the immature or unrecognized status of the profession in these countries, and a factor that perpetuates this status. The next section discusses the status of the HRD profession in the Kingdom.

7.3. The Status of the HRD Profession

This theme of the research describes how the management in public organisations views the role and function of HRD practitioners. It is important to emphasize that the status of the profession within a given organisation is linked with the location of HRD practices. In some public organisations, HRD functions are taken seriously. For example, one participant who is a manager of manpower development in one of the big public agancies in Saudi Arabia that invests heavily in HRD, said:

‘I regard HRD as one of the most important departments if its members are carefully selected. In our organisation, the Deputy Governor is responsible for planning and development, which means our organisation takes HRD activities seriously into consideration’ (P4).

The above participant viewed the location of HRD within the organisation and the rank of the person responsible for it as indicators of the organisation’s attitude towards HRD. The higher the position of this individual, the greater the implied importance attached to HRD.

In the majority of the public organisations, however, it was perceived that HRD practitioners received little attention or recognition from either the management or the
employees in the organisation. The comments from participants revealed that there was concern about a lack of recognition for the HRD profession and for the role and function of its practitioners.

For instance one manager expressed frustration over a prevailing failure to recognize HRD as an activity involving special knowledge and expertise, an attitude which he felt had a negative impact on staff morale and commitment:

‘Most public organisations look at these people who work in the field of HRD as unimportant and think anyone can do their job, which is why many employees in HRD departments don’t take their job seriously.’(P8).

The attitude expressed by the above comment results from the fact that the profession and practice of HRD has not yet been extensively established in Saudi public sector organisations. Because people do not fully understand what HRD is (or potentially could be), they think ‘anyone can do the job’. A similar attitude toward the HRM function has been found in Pakistan, as Khilji (2001) reported.

This low level of recognition of HRD as a profession may be due to the absence of HRM/HRD programmes in the Saudi universities, as mentioned in the previous section. This was the view of this Director of Training and Development Department who, when asked for his suggestions to improve the HRD profession, replied:

‘Having professionals in the field should be taken seriously by providing degrees at Master and Bachelor levels. Also, we should have in Saudi Arabia a certificate for each trainer. For example, the trainer should get a certificate in order to be a certified trainer. This would contribute to HRD professionalism.’(P11).

He went on to express his aspiration for HRD to be treated on a par with other areas of specialized expertise requiring extensive training and education:

‘I am a pharmacist; I am a professional like teachers. I want to see the field of HRD in Saudi Arabia become a profession, like law, pharmacy and engineering.’(P11).
The above participant hoped to see HRD as an established and recognized profession. His view resonates with an ongoing debate and calls for increasing the professional stature of HRD as a concern of both academic and practitioners for the last two decades (Kahnweiler, 2009).

However, the prevailing negative attitudes will not change unless there is an effort to provide a professional level of education or training to those employed in the field of HRD. In section 7.2.1, on the structure of HRD departments, it was reported that HRD/T&D functions are located in an independent department in public organisations, which is an encouraging sign of a growing interest. However, there is still a discouraging attitude toward the practitioners and toward the quality of employees working in HRD/T&D departments. The consequence is that in practice, HRD practitioners simply serve as administrators, facilitators, or coordinators for training and development programmes. One Director of a Training and Development described the role of HRD/T&D departments in Saudi public organisations (which he saw as lagging behind the private sector) as follows:

‘Many HRD/T&D departments in public organisations work as training and scholarship coordinators to contact training centres or private trainers to arrange for fixed (general) training programmes. But the case is different in large private organisations like ARAMCO or SABIC. These have fully established HRM and HRD units’ (P21).

Another general Manager of Planning and OD, who had worked in a ministry for more than 17 years, illustrated the role of his department in his setting:

‘What we do is that when we receive the training brochures from the IPA, which includes courses by subject, and timetable, we pass it to the Ministry departments and branches to let them find out their training needs according to their subjects. Then we follow up with them to complete the administrative work and contact the IPA admission department. So, I can conclude that we acknowledge the employees’ and direct managers’ requests’ (P5).
Both of these quotations draw attention to the restricted scope of the HRD function within public sector organisations. They indicate that HRD practitioners do not take part in strategic organisational planning because their role is not recognized as having a strategic function. Moreover, the above statements describe HRD as reactive rather than proactive. This lack of power and consequent ineffectiveness was perceived by a number of participants, who agreed that HRD/T&D departments lack the authority to function on their own as proactive professionals and must do what management says, whether it is right or wrong. As one participant noted, ‘The main responsibility is to arrange and coordinate training and scholarship activities and listen to the top management regarding their desire for training or scholarships’ (P21).

In addition, a number of participants agreed that because the function of HRD is not considered sufficiently high-powered, it is not allocated a budget that is sufficient to carry out its activities. One Manager of Manpower Development Department with 22 years of experience in the field voiced his concern regarding the allocation of funds in the following words:

‘Our budget is increasing slowly. This year we asked for 7 million (SR) but we got 4 millions. Next year we will ask for 13 millions. Our experience tells us that if we increase the ceiling of our budget, the Ministry of Finance will deduct about 40% or 50% because the discussion of the budget relies on bargaining……. Lack of financial support is another obstacle because when we go to negotiate with the Ministry of Finance, the last thing that’s talked about is the training fund’ (P1).

The above participant raised his concern based on his experience of a tough negotiating process in which the department was always beaten down by the Ministry. The lack of funding support, however, is not only at Ministry level but may also occur from the top management within the organisation, as noted by the following OD director, who had been working in the organisation for 24 years, when he said:
‘Sometimes the top management creates problems because it may decide to reduce the allocations for training and development programmes because it considers the Department of Training & Development as not only unessential but also unproductive’ (P16).

A training manager, with the same frustration apparent in his voice and facial expression, shared his views:

‘Unfortunately, when the top management wants to cut the costs they cut the training budget. This gives an indication of how much they think about and view the importance of employees’ training and development. This is not just at my organisation level but it is in the public organisations in the Kingdom’ (P12).

He continued to express his frustration when he revealed:

‘Also, I have never ever been involved in setting training and development financial resources, which makes me disappointed and unhappy about the future of the training and development role in making our organisation develop and succeed and empowering our employees’ (P12).

The interviewee here clearly felt that his exclusion from important decision-making reflected and perpetuated the marginalization of HRD activities within the organisation.

These participants highlighted the practical impact of the attitude of Saudi bureaucracy toward HRD activities and effectiveness, and suggest an underlying reason for it; an instrumentalist view in which managers expect to be able to see a clear return for money spent. The limited funding for HRD activities makes the people who work in HRD/T&D departments feel that the HRD function is not valued by the organisations. This puts HRD practitioners under a level of pressure that makes it difficult for them to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. They appear to be caught in vicious circle whereby they are underfunded because they are perceived as less important, yet they cannot fulfil their potential role effectively because they are underfunded. They raised concerns about the need for an attitude change among top management. HRD staff should be treated in ways that confirm their importance and value to the organisation.
On the other hand, some participants were more optimistic, believing that the role of HRD professionals would find its place in public organisations in the future and the department would play a vital role in making plans and strategies. As one of the participants who worked in the healthcare sector pointed out:

“Our political leadership takes training & development programmes seriously into consideration. The K.S.A will face intense competition, especially since we have signed the WTO agreement. Therefore, if the public sector doesn’t pay attention to HRD, it will face problems regarding its performance, which will not be satisfactory’(P11).

The above statement implies that the change in the organisational environment in Saudi Arabia and the pressures of globalization would force public organisations to rethink their strategies and allow HRD practitioners to play the role of strategic planners. In this respondent’s view, this situation indicates that there is a real need to re-evaluate the status of HRD practitioners. The idea that they are of low professional status must be challenged and public organisations must be encouraged to recognize the strategic importance of HRD practice, if they are to compete in the global arena.

The views put forward by participants concerned about the lack of professionalism in HRD are in themselves a plea for sustained professional development opportunities. A move such as this would enable HRD professionals to gain and effectively consolidate their professional skills.

7.4 HRD Activities

This section will discuss the practice of various HRD activities, including training needs assessment; the methods used for selection and nomination of employees; the training provider; method of training delivery; training quality; training evaluation/follow up; performance appraisal; career development and finally T&D culture.
7.4.1. Training Needs Assessment

Training needs assessment is considered as the first and most important stage of the training cycle (Wilson, 2004) as mentioned in the literature review chapter. An analysis of the quantitative research findings showed that the bulk of participants (81.7 per cent) claimed that TNA was carried out regularly within their organisations. In nearly three-quarters of these organisations, TNA was conducted on a yearly basis. In 18.3 per cent of organisations no assessments were carried out. These statistics make it clear that generally, Saudi public sector organisations carry out TNA regularly. This finding is in line with earlier research in this area. For example, a study conducted by Al-Athari (2000) revealed that 73 per cent of Kuwaiti organisations in both the public and private sectors carried out regular TNA compared to the 13 per cent of organisations in which no assessments took place. In Malaysia, a study of big manufacturing organisations carried out by Abduallh (2009c) revealed that 92.1 per cent performed TNA; in 74.3 per cent of cases at a minimum rate of once a year.

However, the presence of regular TNA activities does not necessarily indicate an effective TNA process. Moreover, even where some form of TNA was conducted, it should be noted that the interviewed participants considered TNA to be an aspect of HRD that was particularly problematic because it was not well established on a coherent body of approaches. Therefore, the absence of systematic training needs assessment was considered as one of the defects in HRD concerning its efforts to meet the needs of both organisations and individuals in Saudi public organisations. According to most participants, HRD activities are not conducted in an appropriate manner. The majority of participants emphasized the need to use a scientific approach to conduct training...
needs assessments. In the words of one participant who worked in one of the largest ministries in the Kingdom:

‘There is a need to establish a systematic approach for training and development in order to ensure that every employee is getting the required development. I am not happy with our procedures for nomination because we depend directly on the manager’s personal judgments more than on a systematic approach. The nomination should be systematic to ensure equal opportunities among the ministry’s employees.’ (P1).

The above participant raised his concern that in the absence of a rational approach to TNA, decisions were subjective and uninformed. His concern was about the need for justice and fairness in the process of nomination.

Another participant attributed the neglect of TNA in his organisation to the lack of expert HR/HRD staff to conduct the TNA; as he put it:

‘Training needs analysis is not accurately determined because they lack the knowledge to do it systematically and scientifically. Therefore, they depend on the desires of the employee, not his actual needs. There should be a clear determination of the training needs in terms of needed skills, whether technical or behavioural. Also, most employees don’t know that training and development should be based on a need. Basically, they don’t get trained to improve their skills to do the job effectively’ (P9).

The participants recognized the importance of TNA as a vital stage of the training process that, if not carried out properly, will lead to subsequent training activities being ineffective. This will result in waste of time, money and effort. One participant made this clear in the following comment:

‘If we have a good TNA, then we are going to send the right person to the right training programme. This will result in him applying what he has gained from the training programme to the work place and will improve the way things are done and solve work problems’ (P8).

By pointing out how TNA should work, this participant implied that if organisations do not conduct it appropriately, the wrong employees could be selected for training, or sent on inappropriate courses, so the investment is misdirected and the potential benefit to
the organisation is not realized. In the following sub-section the methods used to select employees for training will be discussed.

7.4.2. TNA Methods

Since the majority of participants said that they do not apply scientific methods when identifying TNA, this has resulted in a variety of TNA methods being used. Many of the participants pointed out that recommendation by the direct manager and requests from individuals are the most commonly used methods for TNA. As one OD manager stated regarding TNA methods:

‘I may say that we are not paying attention to this issue and we depend on the employees’ desire and the perspective of their direct manager’s without doing a clear analysis of the individual’s and/ or organisation’s needs’ (P14).

Similarly when describing the procedure his organisation followed to nominate employees to attend training programmes another respondent added:

‘Through the employee’s request and/or observation and requests by the direct manager or head of department we view and deal with the employee request as an informal method, and the request of a direct manager as a formal method. As I said, there is no true training needs analysis due to the lack of staff or external consultants to carry out the analysis’ (P9).

From the above quotations, it is clear that public organisations in Saudi Arabia make training decisions based on both the request of the direct manager and the desire of the employees. However, the desire of employees is seen as an informal method for identifying their needs, and organisations are more comfortable with requests from the direct manager, which carries formal authority. One interesting comment regarding the request of the employees to attend training programmes came from a general manager of planning and OD. His description of the role of employees in the TNA comes from someone with 17 years of experience in the field in one of the largest ministries:
‘Nowadays, employees make their own personal efforts to attend training courses or programmes. Thus, if someone is active, he will get the opportunity. However, if the employee is not active and does not ask for training, he will not get any because there is no systematic training and the training effort is not based on an actual training plan’ (P5).

The above quotation reveals that some employees have their own agenda and plans with regard to their training and development needs. This means that employees who do not take the initiative are, in the absence of proper needs assessment, easily overlooked and so employees who actually need training may not receive it. Even when efforts are made by employees to attend a training programme, these are not in themselves enough because (as previously mentioned) they do not constitute a formal method for identifying training needs. In addition the employees need the approval of their direct managers. It is assumed that the direct manager can make appropriate recommendations because he has more knowledge about the performance of his employees than anyone else, as this senior manager makes clear in the following comment:

‘We depend on the direct manager as a key to determining training needs assessments for his employees because he (the direct manager) has a background about his employees: knows their skills, behaviours, abilities ...etc. Therefore, they (the direct managers) select the appropriate programme for each employee. Thus, the direct manager advises us about the employees’ T&D requirements’ (P6).

HRD practitioners in Saudi public organisations believe in the importance of the role played by the direct manager. This role is pivotal in terms of analysing the needs of current employees and in forecasting the future skills needed for the job and the organisation. Direct managers know better than anyone else which areas need to be improved for their employees. However, as will be seen later, other factors may intervene in the decision, undermining the value of the manager’s knowledge as a determinant of training need.
Only two of the participants (out of the whole group of interviewees) mentioned using a questionnaire as a method for determining TNA. One of the respondents with 24 years of working experience described the TNA process in his setting:

‘We usually determine training requirements every year (in August) by asking all departments to fill out a questionnaire form. We designed a form of questionnaire to determine the requirements and the number of those who will be sent to attend training courses. We do our best to meet the requirements in accordance with our abilities’ (P13).

Similarly the other participant pointed out that:

‘We don’t do it systematically, we distribute a questionnaire (form) to be filled by those employees who want to go for training or to continue their education and get the approval from their direct manager’ (P21).

With this method, again the decision is left to the employees. They decide their own training and development needs by completing a questionnaire and then the questionnaires and the list of choices are subject to approval from the direct manager. From the above quotations it appears that the decision about whether or not to attend training courses is made by employees on the basis of their own preferences, in other words their likes and dislikes, which may not correspond to the organisation’s needs.

Moreover, as one OD manager pointed out, ‘Any employee has the right to excuse himself or postpone his attendance on the training programme’ (P15). Also, some participants were concerned that the employees would benefit less from any training programmes that they requested themselves, because they were likely to be looking for reward or for future opportunities, rather than objectively evaluating their skills and knowledge.

From the above comments we can conclude that there is no systematic approach towards TNA in public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia. Rather, the practice is to nominate or select employees to attend training and development programmes on the
basis of ad hoc requests or departmental recommendations. Therefore there is a lack of coherence at the organisational, occupational and individual level.

The above finding is supported by the data gathered from the questionnaire surveys as illustrated in Chapter Five. The Saudi participants said they relied primarily on the statement (Head of department or line manager’s report) as the main method for determining training needs; almost three-quarters reported using this method always or frequently, more than half doing so always or frequently. The majority reported that training for employees was provided at the request of the employee. Other TNA methods were used far less often. The method least used is the personal interview with employees; over half of those surveyed said they never/rarely used this method. In terms of falling popularity this was followed by direct observation, performance appraisal report, and finally the questionnaire survey and analysis of employee’s job description.

The open ended questions and interview data revealed many factors inhibiting TNA. Among these are the absence of qualified manpower, the absence of clear HRD strategies, plans and policies, and the lack of awareness and low budget for HRD activities. An OD manager in one ministry pointed out:

‘It is very important to determine the training and to identify training needs. But due to the lack of specialized and competent staff to perform this task, we don’t perform it..... It is very expensive to hire or sign contracts with experts. For instance, one project or programme may cost 500,000 SR so the top management doesn’t agree to it’ (P5).

The above findings emphasize that the lack of coherent and systematic TNA is attributable both to lack of expertise and to shortage of resources. Indeed, this finding is consistent with other studies, for example, Abdullah (2009c); Al-Athari (2000); Al-Hamadi et al. (2007); Atiyyah (1992). The role played by the direct manager’s and
employees’ requests is important in the TNA process; this is emphasized by many authors (e.g. Dohery and Hone, 2002; Wilson, 2004). Also, Kempton (1995) described identifying training needs as something that must be made very clear with line managers. However, it does seem that in Saudi public organisations the TNA process is very subjective because the question of what employees might need is answered primarily in terms of the opinions of the direct manager. This control extends to the questionnaires that are intended for completion by employees. Once these have been completed by employees, the questionnaires are submitted to direct managers for their comments. As a result, decisions about the needs of employees are being based on the judgment of individual managers rather than on objective criteria. Such decisions, moreover, are often influenced by social relations, especially in the absence of performance appraisal and interview appraisal. The following sub-section will discuss this theme.

7.4.3 Role of Social Relations

A number of authors have pointed out that the various TNA methods in use depend on the culture of the organisation (Kempton, 1995; Wilson, 2004). In Saudi Arabia, both national and organisational culture attach great importance to social relations, which are often instrumental in obtaining services, privileges and appointments of all kinds. The interview findings indicated that in Saudi public organisations, this influence extends to TNA. Almost all the participants admitted that social relations rather than actual needs influence employee nominations for training programmes. One OD ministry manager made the following comment:

‘I cannot deny that. Unfortunately, friendship, family relationships, and social relations have great impact on selecting employees for training courses, although we try to be fair’(P4).
With regard to this issue an HRD manager with 25 years of experience in the field having worked in two different public agencies made a similar comment:

‘Ok, I mean that social relationships play a big role in selecting the employees for training overseas. Even though we try to set a regulation, we face this problem’ (P7).

The comments made by both of the above participants reveal a conflict between the entrenched cultural role of social relations, and an awareness that equitable, objective and systematically applied criteria should be applied. The term ‘fair’, used by the first participant, demonstrates an awareness that his organisation should undertake to practise an ‘equal opportunities’ policy. The second participant also noted that his organisation tried to ensure equal opportunities by introducing regulations. The above participants favoured a ‘professional’ approach to employee selection. However they were of the opinion that efforts in this regard are undermined by aspects of traditional Arab culture when TNA practices are implemented in Saudi organisations. This means that transferring a systematic approach into practice is a challenge.

When the researcher asked another OD training manager whether he thought that friendship, tribe and social relations played a role in nominating employees the participant replied immediately:

‘Of course, all the elements you mentioned play a very important role in selecting the employees. For instance, there are some spoiled employees who are always given an opportunity for attending in-house or overseas training courses in order to get promotion’ (P5).

The term ‘spoiled employees’ is such a powerful expression that it goes beyond just simple social relations. The term ‘spoil’ suggests excessive care taking and favouritism. It is often said that someone is ‘spoiled’ in situations that are characterized by excessive indulgence and no consequences for behaviour, for example, when parents over-indulge
their children. When the term ‘spoiled’ was used by this participant, it indicated the existence of an alarming organisational environment in which certain employees get whatever they want, whilst others are not considered.

Saudi Arabian society is run along tribal lines and this can cause problems because individuals depend on tribal connections, roots and regional differences to assist them in work situations. As discussed in Chapter Three, tribal and family allegiances exert great influence in employment situations. In Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states the majority of people use their tribal name and not their family name. The status of an individual depends on his/her tribal or group affiliation and is rarely based on his/her merits (Al-Hamadi et al. 2007; Mellahi, 2007; Agnala, 1998). In a society organized along tribal lines, the family is the central unit and it is the focus of all relationships and allegiances. A person’s duty towards his/her family is more important than anything else and the tribe is next in order of importance. Everyone has an obligation to look after family and tribe members in all areas of life.

Another OD manager emphasized the impact of this kinship structure in his own words:

‘Oh, yes. There is a clear impact because our social system values family and friendship relationships. Also, because the society is still traditional as ‘Wastah’ is part of our daily practice’ (P19).

A similar view was expressed by another participant, when he said:

‘Certainly, social relationships and the employee's personality play an important role in the committee's approval. Let me say that, we don’t face this problem when nominating employees to join local training centres. However, we do face it when nominating employees to join programmes outside Saudi Arabia. There are preferences for some employees because it is considered an opportunity which is not given to everyone’ (P2).

The term ‘wastah’ is widespread in Saudi Arabia in the daily practices of both private and public organisations. The practice of wastah is utilized as a form of mediation in order to obtain certain benefits. The latter participant raised the issue of managers
giving preference to employees because they are relatives or friends, especially when
the training programmes are outside Saudi Arabia, because these are considered
opportunities granted to those who have ‘wastah’. The strength and wide practice of
informal networks, nepotism and wastah in Saudi organisations weakens the
enforcement of a systematic HRD approach. A number of comments included in the
questionnaire similarly suggested that this was the case. For example one participant
noted that hard work did not guarantee inclusion on the training programmes but rather
the reverse. He stated that ‘an unsatisfactory performance coupled with wastah would
guarantee a training trip abroad’ (P9).

The above finding suggests that Saudi culture has implications for studies of HRD
practices in Saudi public organisations, as does the practice of nominating employees to
join training and development programmes subject to personal connections and wastah
recommendations. These issues present particular difficulties in collectivist cultures.
For example, in Arabic society, an individual must put his valued obligations to family,
tribe and friends before the needs of the organisation. Indeed, such claims have been
made by other studies (see for example, Aycan at el.; 2007; Mellahi, 2007; Mellahi,
2006; Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Assad, 2002; Mellahi and Wood, 2001; Agnala, 1998;
Atiyyah, 1993a; Dadfar, 1993; Ali, 1990; Al-Faleh, 1987). Thus, there exist different
and even competing assumptions about practice, whether about training, performance,
implementation and so on.

Having considered how training needs are assessed or candidates selected, we now turn
to the training itself, including such issues as where it is delivered, and by whom.
7.4.4 Method of Delivery

Organisations must consider the question of where and how to carry out their training and development programmes. T&D programmes can be conducted in different ways; these might include on-the-job training or off-the-job but in-house within the organisation if they have their own training centres, or training could be conducted off-the-job outside the organisation by external training providers or at any other venue outside the organisation. Not surprisingly the most frequently used method of training is the off-the-job training outside the organisation. An OD manager with 17 years of experience in a large ministry outlined the method of training in his ministry. He said ‘Our training activities are 90 percent off-the-job, in the Institute of Public Administration’ (P5). Another participant with 22 years of experience stated that ‘We never use on-the-job training; what we use is off-the-job training’ (P3). These quotations reflect the fact that most Saudi public organisations do not have their own training centres or training rooms. Therefore they rely on external providers to run and manage training programmes for their employees. Off-the-job training but within the organisation (internal training courses) is a very limited practice in Saudi public organisations for many reasons, as this OD manager illustrated with the following comment:

'We are unable to conduct training programmes in-house for many reasons: we don’t have training rooms. That is why it is not only us depending on external training but most of the public organisations. I do believe that this is really not the right way in training. We should have our own training programmes to meet our real needs. These training programmes in IPA or elsewhere are designed for all, based on general topics and general training needs' (P14).

The above participant indicated how organisations were disadvantaged by not having the required facilities to run in-house training courses, as this forced them to rely on
general programmes available outside, rather than having training tailored to the specific requirements of the organisation. In this respect, the public organisations are the victims of a bureaucratic, over-centralized approach, whereby they need permission from the Ministry of Civil Services to set up training centres within their organisations, since the IPA is the government body responsible for providing administrative training to public employees. An OD manager working in a large ministry with more than 1000 employees described the difficulties his ministry faced when they wanted to open some training rooms equipped with all the necessary facilities. In his words:

‘We faced serious problems when we decided to obtain permission to open some training rooms in order to conduct some training programmes, because the Ministry of Civil Services requested us to fill in and complete a lot of forms which required following long bureaucratic procedures. However, we tried to avoid these procedures by inviting them to come and evaluate our programmes & facilities, but they refused and they ordered us to fill in these complicated forms. Therefore, I think that these procedures and rules regarding training programmes should be revised. What is happening now in Saudi public organisations regarding HRD activities is not right and is not in the right direction’ (P22).

This manager clearly saw bureaucratic regulations as an obstacle to public organisations’ efforts to set up their own training centres, and felt a sense of ingrained pessimism due to a lack of autonomy. He also felt that the influence of the Ministry of Civil Service on the way organisations provide training to public employees is detrimental to the training itself. The expressions ‘not right’ and ‘not in the right direction’ reflect dissatisfaction and frustration with the regulations surrounding HRD activities. The same interviewee went on to explain why he thought in-house training would better meet organisations’ needs:

‘In-house training programmes take the organisation’s privacy into consideration. Also, it is unacceptable to gather the employees of the public sector on one training programme without paying attention to each organisation’s field of activity because the trainers will focus on
giving lectures (theoretical subjects) that are not linked with their [trainees'] work’ (P22).

In the above quotation ‘privacy’ is a very powerful term to use in relation to training. It suggests a fear that the mingling of employees from different organisations may result in the disclosure of confidential information, or perhaps a weakening of organisational culture. He points out that main benefit of in-house training courses, however, is that they are designed and customized to meet specific needs and to focus on current issues.

In-house training allows employees from different departments and branches of the same organisation who share the same vision to get together and use examples from the organisational environment. Such advantages are lost when employees are sent to public training programmes.

In contrast, there are a few public organisations that have training rooms. These are usually academic organisations or large organisations such as those in the healthcare or electricity sectors. However, these indicated that in-house training, too, is not without its disadvantages. An OD manager in an academic organisation first described the benefit of having training rooms in his organisation:

‘We have fully-equipped training rooms that are under the supervision of my department. Last year we provided in-house training to 134 of our employees. Regarding the time of training, we give consideration to this issue. For instance, if training is to be conducted by foreign trainers, the duration of the training course will be from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm…….If the trainers are local or internal, then the training course is conducted from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, so the trainee can return to his work. This is convenient timing as the employee can stay at work and the work won’t be disrupted by the training course’ (P8).

However, he went on to present the other side of the pictures:

‘The outstanding problem is that the employees are not punctual. Some employees come to the training rooms late because they have some work they want to finish before coming to training class. Also, sometimes, the employees receive phone calls or are called out during the training
session to answer questions or solve some work problems. Sometimes they don’t come to the second half of the training’ (P8).

The first quotation indicates the flexibility gained by the organisation in running and managing training courses internally. The informant stressed that the importance and strength of internal training lies in the fact that there is no need for employees to leave their workplace. The training course is scheduled around the needs of the organisation. It allows the organisation to choose a date, time and number of training hours that do not conflict with work schedules. It allows employees to attend and then go back to their work. However, as the second quotation shows, a disadvantage with in-house training is that some participants are far more likely to be interrupted in order to deal with issues related to their daily work.

Another advantage of in-house training is the opportunity to draw on the expertise of managers who have a good understanding of their organisation’s responsibilities and the role of employees within the organisation, as indicated by the following comment:

‘...we conduct 10 to 13 in-house seminars annually for our employees after they return from summer vacation. These seminars are held by some managers or experts. For instance, we held some seminars last year, in which 24 lecturers participated in conducting them, 10 of them line and general managers from our organisation’ (P16).

From the above quotation it is clear that organisations with their own training centre have freedom in conducting training courses. Also, this kind of training allows senior managers to play an active role by participating in delivering the training. However, it also emerged from the interviews that employees might be less motivated to attend training courses held in-house, as they prefer to attend courses that are located outside the organisation in well-known training centres.

One participant raised this issue in the following terms:
‘Our employees will not be motivated to have in-house training because that will not assist them to gain points for the purpose of getting promotion. For me, I prefer on-the-job training and in house training because I believe these types of training are more effective and focused, but we have to look at employees’ motivation. (P17).

These comments clearly indicate the importance of motivating employees to attend training courses. Although the organisation wants to have its own training centre, the employees want to go away from their day to day work to a recognized training centre because they perceive the certificates obtained as having instrumental value for their future advancement. Thus, this participant indicated a conflict between employees’ agenda and the interests of the organisation.

The above findings suggest that Saudi public organisations rely mainly on off-the-job training. The questionnaire survey finding supports this finding; more than eighty percent of the respondents reported using off-the-job training (outside the organisation), while fewer than a third reported using on-the-job training. The discussion about training methods raised a further question about training providers and venues which will be discussed in the following section.

7.4.5. Training Provider and Venues

It is clear from the previous section that Saudi public organisations depend heavily on off-the-job training that is conducted externally, by an external training provider. For Saudi public organisations, the IPA is the main training provider. The IPA was founded in 1961 as a government body to provide training programmes for all public employees. It has headquarters in Riyadh and three branches, one in the Eastern Province, one in the Western Province and a Women’s branch in Riyadh.
Relying on a single training provider creates problems for Saudi public organisations, as this Manager of Manpower Development, in one of the largest ministries in the Kingdom, employing more than 5000 employees, shared with the researcher:

‘The number of employees is increasing along with the training and development budget of government organisations. However, the Institute of Public Administration is not able to meet this rapid increase.’ (P1).

Similarly, a Training and HRD Director complained:

‘Last year we trained only 350 employees in the IPA and the rest, more than 800 employees, were rejected. We understand that the capacity of the IPA is limited but the public organisation demands more than the IPA can offer.’ (P17).

Another OD participant emphasized not only the capacity of the IPA, but also the distribution of its branches:

‘The IPA alone is unable to meet the rapid increase in training needs for all public organisations due to its limited capacity, with only three branches. Therefore, new branches should be established especially in the main cities in the Kingdom because this will decrease the expenses of the employees' training (tickets, accommodation, etc). (P19).

The above both highlight the IPA’s limited capacity. Having only one training provider not only limits the number of employees who can receive training, but also poses difficulties of access and related costs. The Kingdom contains 13 provinces and the majority of the participants emphasized the need for training centres to be more widely distributed among them.

Since the IPA has branches only in three cities (Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam), public organisations located in the rest of the Kingdom are disadvantaged, as this Director of a Training and Scholarship department in one of the public agencies elaborated:

‘We have a major problem which is the lack of IPA branches in other regions in the Kingdom. This affects all of the public organisations and government branches in these regions. If the employees want to attend a
training programme they must travel many km to Riyadh, and leave their families’ (P18).

This comment reflects the fact that the Kingdom covers a vast area and travel from city to city can be difficult and inconvenient. Moreover, as this quotation indicates, the issue of ‘family’ is an important factor in determining employees’ willingness to attend training programmes outside their cities. As has been discussed earlier (see Chapter 3, and section 7.4.3. in this chapter), Saudi people value family and social responsibilities, and these commitments may prevent them from participating in training programmes. In Saudi Arabia, employees do not feel comfortable if the training will take place far away from their family, because a man has obligations for the welfare of his family members. Traditionally, in Saudi society, the man is the family’s head, provider and protector, and his responsibilities also cover his extended family. That is why Saudi employees are reluctant to attend training programmes away from their hometown. In this regard, some participants revealed that some employees never attend training programmes and others had not done so for more than 20 years. Thus, for a variety of reasons, participants were frustrated by the restriction to one training provider (IPA). They wanted to be able to secure training resources with less bureaucracy and red tape, for IPA’s capacity to be increased and branches more widely distributed, for private training centres to be encouraged and supported, and for public organisations to be allowed to have their own training centres in order to provide training in-house for their own employees. All participants expressed a high level of frustration and discomfort with the current situation, which puts the organisations under too much pressure from lack of training opportunities for their employees.

Indeed, Majils Ash-Shura on 19/03/2010 discussed a report about the achievement of the IPA for the year 2009. It admitted that the IPA had failed to respond to the large
increase in demand for in-service training for government employees, because the IPA only meets 17 per cent of the number of candidates. That led to dissatisfaction to the public employees and their organisations. Majils Ash-Shura also discussed the obstacles that have a negative impact on the IPA’s achievements in different areas. It concluded that the IPA should be supported by increasing its funding and staff to enable it to achieve its objectives and plans and meet the public organisations’ needs (AlRiyadh Newspaper, 2010a). However, these recommendations, in a highly bureaucratic system, will take a long time to be implemented.

There is a need for further steps to be taken to address training opportunities and to benefit from others’ experience, according to one Director of T&D in a large public organisation with 15 years of experience. His proposals were:

‘Give the public organisations the flexibility to have their own training centres. Also, we should benefit from others’ experiences, for example, Malaysia which has a number of public training centres which are located all over the country and provide training for a large number of public workers’ (P17).

This comment indicates that Saudi Arabia can learn from successful experiences elsewhere. ‘Looking east’ or ‘looking west’ are becoming a common trend among practitioners in Saudi Arabia, which means adopting successful experiences from the west or from the far east, especially from Malaysia. The above participant mentioned Malaysia because it is an Islamic country, so Islamic countries look at Malaysia’s development experience and its ‘Vision 2020’ which aims to fully develop the country, as a successful model for them to follow.

On the other hand, given the limited public provision, a few practitioners suggested that there is a need for certified private training centres in Saudi Arabia to alleviate the
pressure on the IPA. The following comment by the OD manager in an academic institution is a typical example.

\[ 'I \text{ think the Ministry of Civil Service should accredit other training centres in order to open more opportunities for public employees to get the training they need and to relieve the pressure on the IPA}' \] (P10).

The above suggestion reflects the need to move from centralization to decentralization in providing training programmes. In the last two years there has been an increase in the number of private training centres. However, these training centres need to be certified and accredited. If centres were accredited, public employees would be able to use the training certificate to claim points for the purpose of promotion.

Another important issue that was explored in this research is the increased practice in Saudi public organisations of sending employees abroad to attend training programmes or to continue their education. The duration of training programmes varies from 5 days to one year, while trips abroad for the purpose of higher education range from one year to 5 years in duration, depending on the degree the employee is sent to gain. The Saudi public organisations pay the fees for the training programmes or education. Also, they provide the cost of transportation and full-paid leave. The countries to which employees are sent include Arab countries, Western countries and Far Eastern countries. As this Planning and Development manager put it:

\[ 'Top \text{ management prefers to send our employees to Western European countries, U.S.A, Canada, and advanced Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. The ranking of these countries differs from one year to another because many issues are involved in it, for example, requirement of visas, airline booking or reservations, because there are some countries that require early booking}' \] (P16).

It is clear from the above participant that his organisation prefers to benefit from developing countries, which implies that most of the employees in this organisation speak English, which is a requirement in order to be sent to these countries. Also, he
raised the issue of access to these countries in terms of visiting regulations. However, the issue of language makes it difficult for most public employees to benefit from such opportunities. Thus, some organisations benefit from training programmes offered in Arab countries. Egypt is a very popular training destination for many Arab countries, because it offers a variety of training programmes. Also, the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO), which is located in Egypt, offers many training programmes that target all Arab countries. One of the participants commented on the use of Arab training destinations, when he said:

‘We do have overseas training but only in Arab countries, due to [problems with] English language. However, these opportunities are only for top management because they look at it as an excellent opportunity that should be limited to them’ (P19).

The above comment also provides interesting insight into the way training is perceived by top management as a perquisite, rather than a source of strategic benefit to the organisation. Another participant suggested broader motives for sending trainees abroad when he said:

‘Due to the lack of recognized and competent training centres, we send our employees to attend overseas training courses. In addition to that, we concentrate on specialized conferences and seminars that are conducted by international and professional centres, so as to give them [employees] an opportunity to gain and exchange experiences. Also we consider travelling abroad as a type of training (the destination and the family that accompanies his guardian.) but sometimes we don’t send them abroad if this type of training is available in K.S.A’ (P23).

The above comments suggest that overseas training can be a means of compensating for the lack of high quality training opportunities at home, and as a source of learning through openness to ideas and experiences from others. The participant also views travel as a learning experience not only for the employee himself but also for his family who may accompany him. By mentioning the family, he also gives an indication that
these overseas training opportunities usually take place in summer time, as this is when most public employees take their holiday and travel overseas with their family.

From the above we can conclude that Saudi public organisations rely on external training providers, particularly the IPA, as the government body set up to provide in-service training for all public organisations’ employees. A few organisations benefit from private training providers. This finding is consistent with the questionnaire survey findings, where the majority of respondents said they relied on the IPA always or frequently. The next most popular training was private training centres which were said to be sometimes used. Universities and vocational and technical training appear to be used rarely. Also, the questionnaire participants revealed that regarding training outside Saudi Arabia, the most popular place is Egypt, followed by the UAE, then Jordan. Thus, the top three destinations are all Arab countries. Among non-Arab countries, Malaysia ranked first, then European countries and the USA.

The main reasons for training outside Saudi Arabia were to gain different experience and due to the lack of appropriate training in the country. Some view it as a reward for their employees and to meet the employees’ desire. Others believe the quality of training outside Saudi Arabia is better than inside. This raises the issue of training quality, which will be investigated in the next section.

7.4.6 Training Quality

This theme describes how participants view the quality of training available to public organisations’ employees. A number of participants raised the issue of quality in providing training, whether in terms of training centres’ facilities, trainer qualifications or training methods. Although the IPA is the main training provider for public
organisations, most of the participants considered IPA training programmes to be ineffective. This was noted by a Manpower Development Manager, who had been working in the field for more than 23 years, when he said:

‘The IPA also is unable to follow or to keep up-to-date with the development and changes in governmental agencies…. the IPA, frankly speaking, is isolated from the governmental organisations because I have been working more than 20 years in the HRD field, but I’ve never been involved in actions leading to improvement of T&D programmes in the IPA’ (P4).

The above participant was highly critical of the IPA. The term ‘isolated’ is a very powerful expression to describe absence of the relationship that might be expected between the IPA (as provider) and the rest of public organisations (as customer). The participant repeatedly accused the IPA of designing its training programmes in its ‘ivory tower’. The expression, although based on the participant’s own experience in the interaction with the IPA, conveys an impression of frustration and despair that was common among HRD practitioners.

Another senior manager from a large ministry gave specific comments on what he considered to be the weaknesses of the IPA programmes:

‘The IPA programmes are not always good, because its programmes aim to develop general concepts and have no clear goals’ (P5).

The above comment highlights the fact that the IPA training programmes are designed to meet broad objectives that may be applicable to all public organisations and general topics rather than individual needs. The programmes are open to different levels of employees, of different ages and backgrounds, whose needs may actually be very different. One reason for the lack of relevance is that these general programmes are designed in the absence of public organisations’ practitioners, as was reflected in the comment of P4, cited earlier.

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In contrast, there were a few participants who liked to send their employees to general training programmes in the IPA or elsewhere and viewed them as advantageous to the organisation, as this participant described:

‘It allows our employees to get the opportunity to interact with other trainees with different work experience and learn from the different practices of similar organisations (P18).

The above participant thought that it was beneficial for employees from different organisations and backgrounds to get together to discuss and share knowledge and experience related to their functions. Also, these general programmes increase individuals’ networks, which was considered as a powerful tool for the organisation because connections outside the organisation can be exploited to obtain needed information.

However, regarding the quality of training, the common view among the participants was that the quality of trainers is not up to standard. In the words of one of the participants:

‘The trainers follow teaching or instructional methods that concentrate on theoretical aspects. So the trainees can’t get experience or develop their skills. The communication in training seminars is one way, which is from the trainers to the trainees. Most trainers at the IPA use lectures as the main method of training, so the employees forget it immediately after they leave the training seminars’ (P5).

Along similar lines, a planning and development director expressed his opinion about the IPA trainers when he shared the following:

‘The trainers in the IPA use sophisticated Power Point presentation, but it’s still boring. They don’t welcome discussion and usually say there is no time for discussion’ (P23).

Both the above participants raised the importance of having effective trainers, which is key to the success of any training programme. Effectiveness, however, requires more than knowledge of subject matter. Such knowledge must be complemented with
experience and presentation skills, in order to convey it in a way that is interesting, understandable, relevant and memorable. However, the majority of the IPA’s trainers have no previous experience in the public organisations. They have knowledge about modern management concepts but they lack experience and practice that would enable them to discuss and explain how these may apply in the context of public organisations. This may be why the trainers, as expressed by the above-quoted participants, over-emphasise theory in the training sessions. Trainers’ excessively theoretical orientation was emphasized by another participant when he said, ‘The IPA trainers don’t talk based on experience or practice’ (P20).

The above situation led one participant to raise an interesting aspect of the training process: training the trainers. He advocated such training in order to improve the competence of the trainers and to familiarize them with the context of their training subject. He also suggested that trainers should be licensed to ensure that they have not only mastered the subject they teach but also have the necessary skills in teaching methods. Moreover, he thought trainers need to obtain expertise through actual field experience so they will understand what is going on in the field. In his words:

‘Trainers should have training programmes to teach them how to be good trainers. There should be a licensed to train. That would require them to be familiar with the workplace environment and issues. Having a Master or a PhD degree does not guarantee that one is a good or effective trainer. The trainer should be able to master the subject and the methods of delivering training’ (P8).

Such criticisms, however, were not confined to the IPA or other public providers. Participants were also dissatisfied with the quality of training in the private training centres. A Planning and Development manager expressed his dissatisfaction with the standard and reputation of the private training centres:
The quality of training centres is very, very, very weak and they are not appropriate for conducting training courses in terms of environment, training rooms, equipment and competent trainers. We should have in the Kingdom a body to accredit training programmes and training packages’ (P3).

The participant’s comments reflect the situation of most private training centres. These centres depend on trainers from other Arab countries. These trainers are not only unfamiliar with the public organisation environment, but also they are not familiar with the local culture in general. Consequently they focus on theory in curricula. These centres also lack adequate facilities and training materials.

In view of the above situation, the participants pointed out that they sometimes signed contracts with trainers from outside the Kingdom, as this participant shared with the researcher:

‘Of course, we sign contracts with trainers from outside the Kingdom because they have great experience which enables them to provide or offer various useful courses. This characteristic distinguishes them from other domestic trainers who concentrate on providing traditional courses e.g. those concerned with using computers to perform some tasks, such as Microsoft Office, etc.’ (P4).

Another OD manager pointed out that his organisation invites Western trainers to talk about a certain topic. In his words:

‘Some Western training programmes cost a lot of money; last month we paid a trainer from the USA about $30,000 for a one-day programme from 8:00am to 3:30pm, besides the cost of tickets, hotel and transportation. This was attended by 35 of our top managers. They were happy and benefited from it a lot because he was a really experienced trainer’ (P8).

The above participant shared with the researcher that the HRD budget in his organisation was more than 25 million Saudi Riyals (about 7 million US Dollars), considerably higher than in most public organisations. Another point that emerged from his discourse is that this kind of training programme is only for top management, partly
because it is costly and also because top managers usually speak English. Also, the top management are open to learn more about Western management practices.

From the above we can conclude that HRD managers in Saudi public organisations are dissatisfied with the quality of training available in the Kingdom. The major criticisms were the shortage of competent and experienced trainers, and the excessive emphasis on theory. This finding is in line with earlier research in this area. For example, Al-Tawaial (1985), the former Director General of the IPA, reported that 60 per cent of a sample of senior public managers in the GCC described local training as ineffective. Atiyyah (1992) described the IPA staff as incompetent and inexperienced. Also, previous research in the Arab world generally reported that the shortage of skilled trainers was one of the major problems in training (Atitah, 1993a; Al-Faleh, 1987). In this context, also, Wilkins (2001a) stated that most training organisations in the Gulf States rely on expatriate trainers, as there is a shortage of indigenous training professionals. However, Haslinda and Mahyuddin (2009) warned in their study, ‘The effectiveness of training in the public service’ that training programmes can be trivialized if run by unqualified trainers, which weakens the transfer of knowledge to the organisation’s employees. This section has reported participants’ subjective perceptions of training quality. However, more objective measurement of training effectiveness can be achieved by evaluating the output. This issue will be discussed in the following section.

7.4.7. Training Evaluation/Follow-up

Training evaluation is the measurement of a training programme’s success or failure with regard to content and design (Alvarez et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important to evaluate the training to ensure its success and whether or not it achieved the desired
objective. Otherwise, the training practice could be meaningless. Evaluation enables the organisation to gain feedback about the training, information about the training provider and the quality of the trainer. In the field of human resources, many scholars supported this view and inducted that evaluation is a crucial stage in the HRD process and all organisations should apply an evaluation on their HRD programmes (for example, Taylor, 1996; Hale, 2003; Garavan, 1991; Lee, 1996; and MaCracken and Wallace, 2000). A discussion of training and development evaluation has been highlighted in Chapter Two.

In order to investigate how Saudi organisations view T&D evaluation, the interview participants were asked about the importance of the evaluation process for the T&D programmes, whether their organisations evaluate training and development programmes, the main reasons that prevent some organisations from conducting T&D evaluation and the evaluation methods used in their organisations. Most of the participants agreed about the importance for their organisations of evaluating T&D programmes and their outcomes. However, as this Training and Development director indicated, awareness was not necessarily translated into practice.

‘I really understand the importance of training evaluation because you need to know what you are doing and in which direction, but unfortunately we don’t do it’ (P21).

From the above quotation it is clear that this participant considered T&D evaluation as an important process, interestingly, his organisation does not conduct it. He went on to explain his informal approach to obtaining feedback on training.

‘Personally, I usually ask some employees when they came back from abroad training programme, what they have gained from that programme. Also, I ask about their opinion about recommending other employees to attend the same programme or go to the same centre. All of this is informal and they (employees) know it is informal’ (P21).
It is clear from the above quotation that although this participant asked some employees for their opinions regarding their experience in T&D programmes and their benefit, this process was a personal initiative rather than part of a formal process to ensure the benefit from these training activities. Although most of the participants agreed about the importance of the stage of evaluation, several revealed that their organisations do not practise it. Although the above participant asks the employees for feedback after completing the training programme, he does not enquire as to whether they had gained any benefit from these programmes. His main purpose in speaking to employees is to use these informal conversations in making decisions regarding sending more employees to these training centres, but there is no objective evaluation.

Those who do not conduct evaluation to their T&D programmes gave reasons for not practising it. One participant mentioned several issues related to organisational capability to perform evaluation:

‘Our job is only dedicated to training delivery. But after training we don’t know the result, for many reasons: 1) It is difficult to measure training programmes. 2) The measuring process takes a long time. 3) Training evaluation needs specialists in the field of HRD. For these reasons we can’t do the training evaluation. I think this function is very important and we should look at it but we need a lot of things in order to be able to do so’ (P 18).

Again, the above participant acknowledged the importance of the evaluation function but he thought his organisation was prevented from carrying out this function. He views the process of evaluation as a difficult task which requires time and qualified staff. Similar reasons were mentioned by others who do not conduct evaluation. However, in addition to these reasons, some participants mentioned the nature of the work as an obstacle to the evaluation process. One participant reported that this had been a problem
in his organisation, which undermined the benefit even of specialist support for evaluation:

‘We can't evaluate the employees after they attend training courses because evaluation is very difficult; therefore, we sign a contract with a private office to conduct a study in order to enable us to measure the outcomes of training. We paid 550,000 SR for preparing such a study but it was superficial and we didn't benefit from it as we expected because the measure of training outcomes differs from one position to another, e.g. the outcomes of training in the technical positions can be measured: such as computers but in case of administrative positions, it is very difficult to be evaluated’ (P1).

The above participant raised the issue that the outcomes of some training programmes are difficult to measure, while for others it is easy to notice the difference, depending on the availability of immediate tangible job outputs. The outcomes of management training programmes take time to show results (for example leadership, decision making) while with computer training programmes it is easy to notice the progress of the trainees after finishing the programme.

A manpower manager expressed his uncertainty about who should be responsible for performing evaluation, when he said:

‘We don't know who is responsible for evaluation – is it our department or the employees’ direct manager?... I think the direct managers are responsible for ‘evaluation’ because they have a background about their employees, such as their behaviour, skills attitudes etc.’ (P4).

From the above quotation, it is clear that the participant is confused about his role and other department roles regarding the measurement of training programmes’ output. He concluded that it is the responsibility of the direct manager. However, leaving this function to the direct managers makes it still subjective, as it depends on their opinion and preference for special trainees, which reflect personal aspects rather than the actual competence of those concerned. Interestingly, most of those who revealed that they evaluated training programmes declared that, since most of their training programmes
were conducted by external providers, they relied on these training centres to do the evaluation for them and saw it as their responsibility. This view was clearly explained by this OD manager:

‘We trust the IPA training programmes, so we leave this function to them. Our role is to select and nominate the employees to attend the training programmes and the evaluation of these programmes is the role of training centres. When our employees complete the training programmes and come back to the workplace, they bring their training certificate from the training centres and we trust them, especially the IPA’ (P10).

Similarly, another participant described his organisation’s reliance on evaluation by the training centres:

‘For the evaluation, we depend on the report we receive from training centres. These training centres provide us with a report for every trainee who completes the programme. Usually the report tells us mainly about his attendance record’ (P20).

The comments of both participants reflect the fact that most public organisations leave training evaluation to the training providers. For example, the IPA and other training providers evaluate their training programmes through distributing an evaluation form (a one-page questionnaire) to be completed by the trainees at the end of each programme. The questionnaire includes questions about the training materials, the trainer, and the equipment. The result of these questionnaires is for the use of these external training providers, although they usually inform the organisation with a report about the trainees’ attendance. This evaluation method is limited to a self-evaluation based on the reaction of the trainees. The questionnaires ask about satisfaction or enjoyment of the training course. It is important and worth mentioning that some participants are not familiar with evaluation methods and this may explain their reliance on the training
provider to do the evaluation. However, some were familiar with evaluation models like Kirkpatrick’s model.

A few other participants declared that they asked the trainees to fill in a questionnaire, especially when the training provider is a private training centre or overseas training centre. In this context this OD manager described the procedure:

‘When the employee completes his training session, he is asked to fill in a form to outline the advantages and disadvantages of the training course, including the training facilities, training methods, the trainer, and training packages (training materials). Also, the problems that face trainees, the performance of the trainers, methods and training facilities … etc. For instance, we have terminated our contracts with some training centres and trainers due to the negative feedback from the trainees about the centre’s level of efficiency and competency’ (P 8).

Similarly another participant reported a similar practice when he said:

‘Our practice of training evaluation now is done in two ways. One is done through the training centre by requesting the organisation or the training centre to assess the performance of the employee regarding his punctuality and participation. The second way is by requesting the employee to submit an evaluation report after he has finished a training programme. We take this report seriously by reviewing it and sometimes we contact with the training centres’ representative to inform them about our employees’ feedback and their reaction to the centre. We use the result to select the best training centres. And sometimes we draw a blacklist of some training centres. Unfortunately, we don’t assess the benefits that employees can obtain from training programmes. (P13).

The above comments both reflect how these managers viewed the function of training evaluation. They sought the reaction, opinion, attitudes of the training participant towards the programmes, their contents, the trainers, the methods, materials, duration of the programme and the provider. Based on their trainees’ descriptive opinions, they made the decision either to continue dealing with these training providers or to stop sending their employees to them. Receiving negative feedback could result in blacklisting the training provider and hence no future trainees would be sent. This type
of evaluation is applied only to private training providers inside the Kingdom or overseas. Moreover, these simple questionnaires, known as ‘reactionaries’, ‘happy sheets’ or ‘smile sheets’ focus only on the satisfaction of the individuals only, without measuring behaviour change and impact on performance (O’Toole, 2009).

From the above we can conclude that Saudi public organisations considered the evaluation of programmes as an important stage. Not surprisingly, most HRD literature supports the importance of evaluation as a stage of any systematic HRD process (for example, O’Tool, 2009; Galanou and Priporas, 2009). Also, this finding is consistent with Altarawneh’s (2005) finding that all Jordanian banks believed in the importance of T&D evaluation.

The above finding is consistent with the questionnaire survey findings in Chapter Five, where almost sixty per cent of the respondents said their organisations evaluate their T&D programmes, and the remainder said they do not. However, after investigating this in depth with the interview participants, it was clear that in general, formal evaluation in Saudi public organisations is extremely limited or ignored. The majority of the interview participants declared that they depended on the training provider to conduct the evaluation and send a report to them. The training providers, for example the IPA, use the first level of training evaluation, which is called a ‘happy sheet’. At the end of the training programme, they distribute questionnaires, which are completed by trainees and returned to the trainer. These training centres do not evaluate the impact of training on the fulfillment of organisational objectives. Such evaluation is ad hoc and unsystematic. The questionnaires are poorly designed and give limited useful information, as pointed out by Robinson and Robinson (1989) when they commented on the prevalent practice of providing end-of-course questionnaires to be completed by
trainees and given to the instructor. The research finding is consistent with that of Wilkins (2001a), who pointed out that educational institutions in the Arab Gulf States are not in a position to assess workplace performance and must search for other ways to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes. In this context, the IPA recently announced a plan to employ a distinguished international consultant to evaluate the impact of its training programmes on the governmental agencies (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2010b).

Moreover, in this study, those who reported practising T&D evaluation occasionally, most commonly used a questionnaire. The other main approach was asking the employees’ manager for assessment of the employees’ learning from the training programmes. The main reason for asking the employees to fill in the questionnaire when they come back from the training programmes is to make decisions to blacklist these training centres with negative feedback and encourage and continue to send the employees to those training centres with positive feedback. In this context, Atiyyah (1993a) states that a foreign training centre which repeatedly receives a negative evaluation may be blacklisted and the organisation will not use its services again.

However, it is fair to say that some Saudi public organisations use trainees’ reaction as the common criterion of evaluation. Also, a few organisations reported that they rely on the direct manager to assess the employees’ benefit from the T&D programmes. This finding is consistent with the findings of a recent study released by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) (2009b) which revealed that almost all participants’ organisations (92 per cent) used the first level of evaluation, based on the reaction of the participants. In the UK, only 35 per cent of surveyed companies reported
that they measured their education, training and development programmes (Education and Training, 1998).

Consistent with the findings of this research, Altarawneh (2005) found that most bank groups in Jordan concentrate on trainees’ reactions toward T&D programmes. Al-Ali (1999) reported that the majority of Kuwaiti organisations use the questionnaire as a method to evaluate their T&D programmes. In another empirical study, Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) found that the majority of both government and private Kuwaiti organisations only occasionally evaluate their T&D programmes and the most common level of evaluation is trainees’ reaction. Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) found that 90 per cent of the Kuwaiti government organisations they studied had no specific evaluation procedures for their T&D programmes.

Also, HRD practitioners in Saudi public organisations agreed that the evaluation of T&D programmes is difficult and the most challenging stage in the training cycle. The main reasons that they claimed prevent them from conducting T&D evaluation are the difficulty of evaluating certain jobs, the measuring process takes a long time and the objectives of T&D programmes are not always clear. Interestingly, the participants disagreed that high cost hinders optimum training evaluation. The interview findings are consistent with those of the questionnaire, where respondents ranked the statement, ‘difficulties in measuring T&D programmes’ number one, followed by the statement ‘measuring process takes a long time’, while the cost of evaluating training methods ranked lowest as an obstacle (see Chapter Six, section 6.6.1). Therefore, all public organisations shared some obstacles illustrated above. These findings are consistent with ASTD’s (2009b) finding which shows several barriers to evaluation, including its being too difficult to conduct. Abdullah et al. (2007) similarly reported that evaluation
is the most forgotten and ignored part of the HRD process, because of lack of resources and expertise, the complexity of the evaluation process, absence of job descriptions and unclear HRD objectives. Also, Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) found that the majority of private and public organisations in Kuwait face difficulty in locating the information needed for evaluation.

7.4.8 Performance Appraisal

In this section, the participants were asked questions related to the performance appraisal system and how they link its results to training needs. The performance appraisal is a measurement process to evaluate how well individuals do their job and to flag areas that need attention (Jefferson, 2010). One of these areas is to identify individual training and development needs as a means to develop the organisation’s HRD plan (Armstrong, 2009). There was general feeling among the participants that the practice of performance appraisal in Saudi public organisations is not effective. One of the senior managers, who had more than 25 years of experience in the field of HRD, explained what he considered to be the weaknesses in the system.

‘We evaluate our employees’ performance annually and that is according to the employment regulations. However, it doesn't include training & development considerations. Also we don't discuss the performance evaluation with our employees. I have been working here for more than 25 years but nobody has tried to discuss the performance appraisal report with me; also I haven't discussed it with any of my employees. Above all, the employee has the right according to the employment regulations to look at their performance appraisal result, but nobody follows these regulations in this Ministry or even in the rest of the public organisations as far as I hear’ (P2).

The point made by this participant about the lack of developmental use of performance appraisal was echoed by other respondents, for example:

‘The direct managers assess the performance of their employees in accordance with the assessment form and the Ministry of Civil Service
regulations. We don’t connect the assessment of performance with training and development purposes. During my work experience, I’ve never heard of a direct manager recommending an employee to attend any training course or programme as a result of his performance appraisal. We don’t have appraisal interview’ (P5).

Both participants raised the discourse of T&D as one of the performance appraisal objectives in order to overcome shortcomings in employees’ performance. However, they were concerned that HRD activities are not linked with their employees’ performance appraisal. A possible explanation for this is that the requirements of T&D are not included in the performance appraisal form. The standard format of performance appraisal approved by the Ministry of Civil Service for all public employees does not include T&D needs as a category in the form. Therefore, there is an absence of career planning for the future based on previous performance appraisal results. Public organisations lacked awareness that performance appraisal can be an important tool to guide employees’ T&D, and, thus, such links were absent. According to Saudi Civil Service policy, all public employees are subject to performance appraisal every year by the immediate manager, and each employee has the right to see his performance report. However, both participants admit that such open discussions of the appraisal report were not taking place in practice. The lack of knowledge about the result of the performance appraisal for employees causes employees to be uncertain about their strengths and weaknesses. This indicates a gap in Saudi public organisations between HRD policies and HRD practices. Many regulations and laws have been introduced but sometimes they are not implemented. One of the main reasons for not showing employees their appraisal result is to avoid arguments and conflict. Some managers try to write positive comments in the report if they know that employees may see what they have written in the form.
Also, most of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with employees’ performance appraisal procedures and agreed that the main reason for appraisal is to get promotion, as illustrated in the following quotation:

‘It is done annually via filling in a form that is for all employees, regarding their kind of work they are doing. It is a requirement for promotion decisions. I am not happy with the performance appraisal system in governmental organisations’ (P3).

Another Training and HRD director elaborated on this point when he suggested that the appraisal could also be a mechanism for removing unwanted employees, via promotion or transfer:

‘The performance appraisal is fixed for all positions and I think that we should have our own system and policy. This reflects that the practice of this system is biased and not taken seriously by the line managers or top managers and it is done for the purpose of getting promotion. Also, some heads of department use the performance appraisal result as an opportunity to give some employees opportunities to get promotion and transfer to another department because the head of the department does not want them in his department.’ (P17).

The above participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the existing standard format of performance appraisal which focuses on employees’ characteristics like their cooperation and their communication skills with their managers and peers, rather than employee performance. Some of these characteristics may have more relevance for certain jobs than others. Since performance appraisal is not related to specific job requirements, it has no positive impact in promoting performance in the organisation. For this reason, they wanted their organisations to be free to create and use their own performance appraisal form to meet their needs and to fit their job descriptions, as one participant made clear in the following comment: ‘I think that each organisation should have its own performance appraisal system which suits the organisation’s occupations and type of work’ (P23). Secondly, both participants indicate that the main purpose of
writing the performance report is as an input into decisions on promotion. They were dissatisfied with the performance appraisal system because the process involves bias; if the manager likes an employee, he will comment positively in the form and if he does not like him, he also may comment positively in the form in order to get him a promotion and transfer him to another department, as one participant indicated.

Moreover, another dimension that affects the performance appraisal is the role of personal relations in the process. This is clear from the following comments, which both show how that social relationships influence the appraisal reports. As this OD manager in a ministry expressed:

‘Also, performance appraisal is influenced by factors such as social networks and nepotism. Tribal affiliation and friendship influence the performance appraisal practice in public organisations. These issues are common in these organisations’ (P22).

Another participant made a similar point:

‘The performance appraisal is quite often affected by personal relations with heads of department and favouritism rather than by the employee’s performance (P17).

From the above expressions, the personal relationship between employees and their managers is an important factor in performance appraisal in the public sector. Managers may pay more attention to personal relationships (favouritism) than hard work when filling in the performance appraisal form. This raises the issue of the fairness and justice of treatment and decisions that employees receive from those in authority. Employees’ motivation to work hard could be adversely affected because high performing employees may be treated no better than others, where the system of performance appraisal is influenced by social ties and personal relationships rather than qualifications and merit.
In contrast to the majority view, a few participants reported that their organisations had a good performance appraisal process, as observed in some of the comments on the extent to which performance appraisal was practised:

‘We do our performance appraisal electronically every year. The direct manager is responsible for completing the form on line. Then a copy of this assessment is sent to the employee himself and another copy to the personnel department to be kept in his file. The employee has the right to discuss it with his direct manager.’ (P4).

Similarly, another OD manager revealed:

‘In my organisation we have a special performance appraisal for our employees. We created a special performance appraisal system because the government performance appraisal system is really useless. If the assessment shows that the standard of our employees is not good, we form a committee to discuss or investigate these cases in order to find out the reasons and then we make our recommendations’ (P8).

The above quotations indicated that a few public organisations had tried to improve their performance appraisal and changed the format to meet their needs. However, even these few organisations admitted that they did not use employee performance appraisal to identify T&D needs.

Apparently, from the above findings we can conclude that most Saudi public organisations practise performance appraisal annually, but a majority of the HRD practitioners were dissatisfied with the existing performance appraisal system as they felt it was not taken seriously. Also, the judgments in the performance appraisal are highly subjective to favouritism and nepotism. Moreover, most of these public organisations treated the performance appraisal report as confidential information. In addition, there is a lack of linkage between T&D and employees’ performance appraisal. These findings are consistent with those of the questionnaire survey, where the great majority of respondents said that had a yearly employee performance appraisal, but only a relatively small proportion (about a third) agreed that their
organisations used performance appraisal to determine employees’ performance gap. These findings suggest the importance of integrating the whole HRM system; otherwise, the T&D effort may easily get lost.

The findings are in line with earlier research in this area. For example AlDalan (1995) carried out an empirical study to investigate the perception of managers and employees toward performance appraisal in the public sector in Saudi Arabia. He found that the majority of participants, 88 per cent, agreed that performance appraisal had no positive impact on high performance, 48 per cent of the managers saw no value for performance appraisal, and 46 per cent of the managers agreed that personal relationships had a significant effect on employees’ performance appraisal. Also, Abdulrahman (1987 cited in Assad, 2001) reported that promotion of public employees depended on the performance appraisal report, which he described as an unreliable instrument. Civil Service Bureau (1995) has identified giving employees a higher grade in the performance appraisal report than they deserve as a major problem in the performance appraisal process. In Assad’s (2002) opinion, the reluctance to give employees low grades in the evaluation is to avoid employees’ arguments and complaints. Abdullah and Hiok (2009) similarly found that performance appraisals in Malaysian manufacturing firms have no real purpose or objective. Interestingly, Ben-Bakr et al. (1995) found that in Saudi public organisations, performance appraisal does not play a part in causing stress, and that is because public employees have job security and their payment does not depend on the outcomes of the appraisal report. In contrast, Abo-Doleh and Weir (2007) found that Jordanian private organisations used the performance appraisal information more effectively than public organisations in promotion, retention/termination, layoffs, identifying T&D needs, transfers and assignments.
7.4.9 Career Development

Most participants agreed that the practice of career development in Saudi public organisations is not well established, with the exception of one or two sectors. In the words of an OD, who had spent many years in the HRD field:

‘Unfortunately, this issue does not exist in the public organisations generally. I have been working with governmental bodies for a long time but I have never heard about career path, except in the case of ARAMCO, which has been connecting employment with training. For instance, The Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources was one of ARAMCO’s employees who was promoted from a junior employee to the position of top manager then he was appointed as the Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources. He started from a low level and got the training and development that he needed until he reached a high position. Also this method is followed by the banking sector’ (P 10).

The above reflection suggests that ARAMCO is viewed as a benchmark or pioneer of good practice. ARAMCO was founded by Americans and has adopted American policies and systems in HRM. The participant suggested also that the banking sector has established career development practices for its employees. Banks provide T&D programmes corresponding to the career path of their employees, which are taken seriously by individuals and employees.

Another participant criticized the absence of T&D paths for public organisation employees, as well as their ad hoc T&D practices, as follows:

‘No, we don’t practise career development as you think of it. We have a promotion system. Also, we don’t have continuity in training. For example, when someone takes a programme in leadership, he should take other programmes that relate to the leadership concept, like group dynamics, problem - solving and decision making. This should be like a training path’ (P20).

The above participant viewed the promotion as progression up the employment ladder within the organisational hierarchy. Also, he raised one of the problems in the practice
of HRD, which he described as absence of continuity, which he attributed to the lack of a T&D path. This issue was also brought up clearly by another participant, who said:

‘I want to see people, after they understand the concept of planning, there should be other training programmes related to planning, for example, strategic planning skills. But in our HRD programmes, this continuity is missing. I want to see employees to carry on attending related training programmes. Not to do one programme, then stop and go for another training programme on a totally different subject’ (P22).

The above participant, like the previous one, raised the problem of lack of continuity.

The idea of continuity is different from mere frequency of T&D activities. It implies having a T&D path, so that rather than take courses on a variety of unrelated topics, employees would receive training in related topics or subjects in a coherent way, to develop competences and skills for particular posts and roles. In the absence of attention to employees’ career development and clear focus in T&D practices, public organisations lose some of their talent, as one participant said:

‘Career development is very important for any organisation. If we don’t develop the employees, they will leave and we will have turnover problems. We have to pay attention to retain the best employees. In my opinion this can simply be done through career development opportunities. Most of the public organisations and especially in the health sector, they try to improve the skills and performance of the employees to do the current job but with a lack of career development. Some people change their jobs because they are looking for development in their career which can be offered by other organisations, especially in the private sector….. unfortunately we lose some every year’ (P11).

The above participant raised the issue that the lack of organisational commitment to employees’ career development is affected employees’ retention. Some employees view career development as the responsibility of themselves and their organisations because they want to grow within their own organisations and contribute to it. If their organisations do not provide them with this opportunity, then they will leave for better opportunities.
Only one participant shared with the researcher a positive experience of career development, when he explained that:

‘We made a plan called “the employment career plan” which emanates from the plan of career path that is related to training. When we want to promote someone, we inform or advise him to attend a specific training programme so as to be qualified for promotion. The reason why we follow this method is the difficulties which face us in implementing the Saudization programme.’ (P 4).

The above participant revealed that his organisation had tried to learn from other successful experiences in the Kingdom, like ARAMCO and SABIC, and to benefit from the strong support received from top management. Therefore, this organisation provided employees with the opportunities to develop and grow. The driver for practising career development in this organisation was to implement the Saudization policy. It did not focus on the development of employees alone, but also the organisation as a whole.

From the above findings, we can conclude that there is a lack career development in Saudi public organisations. In this context, the Majils Al-Shura in Saudi Arabia has emphasized that all government agencies should have training paths for their employees and recommended them to coordinate with the IPA in this regard (*Okaz Newspaper*, 2008). This finding is consistent with previous studies that have affirmed that most organisations do not have formal career development polices. For example, Aycan et al. (2007) reported that Omani organisations have a lack of career planning for their employees. Abdullah and Kumar (2008) found that Malaysian manufacturing organisations are not planning for their employees’ career advancement. Also, Agnaia (1997) found that Libyan managers do not prefer to attend T&D programmes as they do not see obvious consequences for their careers.
7.4.10 T&D Culture

A number of participants agreed that there has been a growing awareness of the importance and role of HRD activities in public organisations. However, the function of HRD is not taken seriously. There is a feeling of indifference toward HRD practice in public organisations. Some participants attributed this to employees’ attitude toward training, as noted by a Manpower Development manager:

‘Some of the employees consider training as a type of recreation and fun but not for developing or improving their skills. For instance, if you advise one of them to join or attend a training programme which will take place in the IPA in Riyadh, he may refuse or hesitate but if the training course will be held overseas (outside K.S.A) such as in Dubai or Cairo or somewhere, surely he will agree’ (P4).

The above comment, illustrates the attitudes that shape the culture of training among public employees. The participant described recreation as a motive for attending training programmes, especially if the training is outside the Kingdom. He viewed training outside as encouraging, while training inside was discouraging. Public organisations use training outside the Kingdom as a reward to the employees. In the public employment system there is no provision for monetary reward, but organisations can use training as a reward because employees who attend training programmes will get points and speed up their chance to get promotion and with promotion their salary will increase. On the other hand, the opportunity to go on a trip to attend training programmes is also seen as a reward in itself, as one participant made clear when he said:

‘I view overseas training as a holiday for the employee. For example when we send one of our employees to go to London or Paris to attend a training programme, we don’t look at the skills that he going to gain but we take the view that he will spend a good and happy time and this is part of the reward to him’ (P 5).
Attending overseas courses is a common practice among public employees, especially during summer. This culture makes the HRD practice in public organisations characterized by lack of coherence and makes the management and employees in public organisations attend these programmes as a fad. One participant, who did not hesitate to say that he sometimes considered training as a ‘waste of time, money and effort’, gave the following example:

‘I attended a training course on “six sigma”, but it is very difficult to apply it back in my organisation because we don’t have the culture which assists us in implementing some administrative methods such as “six sigma”, which is unsuitable for our administrative environment. It is good in theory but difficult to practise, so we attend it as a fashion’ (P4).

The above quotation clearly illustrates the lack of purpose in HRD practice, as a result of which some organisations practise HRD activities with no value to be added to their organisations and they recognize that this is the case, as illustrated in the above narrative.

As mentioned earlier (see section 7.4.2.), the lack of systematic HRD practice leads public organisations to undertake HRD without consistency in practices and no improvement in return. In this context, most of those who attend training programmes in western countries are likely to learn modern administrative theories which may be unsuitable for the local management environment. For this reason, it was suggested, most public organisations viewed HRD activities as a reward and recreation, and sometimes they paid lip-service to a particular theory or practice to follow fashion, without any real understanding or consideration of its relevance to the conditions in their organisation, or the Saudi culture generally.
7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored in depth how HRD is actually performed by public sector organisations. In the majority of organisations, perhaps under the influence of government policies and directives, HRD was a distinct department reporting to top management. Participants saw this as indicative of support for the function; it certainly had implications for decision-making power and access to resources. At the same time, however, there was a feeling that the HRD function is not really understood and is perceived as something “anyone can do”, a situation closely linked with the absence of professional preparation in this field in Saudi universities.

Moreover, an underlying theme of frustration, and even despair, was clearly evident in participants’ accounts of practice. They had clear ideas as to how HRD could and ‘should’ be done, but found their aspirations undermined by structural and cultural factors. TNA is not conducted systematically or objectively, but depends on employees’ own requests and managers’ recommendations, which are biased by social relations. Many organisations lack the facilities to provide tailored, in-house training, or feel constrained by regulations, yet the official public training provider, the IPA, lacks the capacity to meet the needs of all employees, and the quality and relevance of training were strongly criticized. Training evaluation, if done at all, is usually confined to the most basic level of employee satisfaction questionnaires. Performance evaluation is conducted regularly, but is not objective, not discussed with employees, and not linked to T&D objectives. The prevailing culture views T&D as a reward or holiday for favoured employees, rather than a means of improving employee and organisation effectiveness.
Overall, the findings present a series of dilemmas and tensions between competing dynamics: between centralization and decentralization in organisations; between privacy and openness; between frustration and effectiveness; and between participants’ perceptions of themselves as victims of their environment and agents of change. These dynamics appear to be in constant interaction, creating a complex context for the conceptualization and realization of HRD.

At various points throughout this chapter, it has been suggested that the structural arrangements for HRD, and the way it is performed, have implications for its potential to play a strategic role in the organisation. This issue will be explored in more depth in the next chapter, which presents the findings related to question three:

“To what extent is the HRD function in the Saudi public sector organisations strategic?”
CHAPTER EIGHT: RESEARCH QUESTION III: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE HRD FUNCTION STRATEGIC?

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings on issues related to the strategic role of HRD in Saudi public organisations. In the previous chapter it was revealed that most of the public organisations have a separate department for the HRD function (section 7.2) which can be seen as an indication of the importance of HRD within the organisation. This raises the question of what organisational actors see as the value of HRD, and whether/how they think it contributes to organisational objectives, as well as what practices are in place to ensure this potential benefit is realized. This chapter, therefore, analyses the insights derived from the interviews regarding issues that facilitate or hinder the potential strategic function of HRD in Saudi public organisations: plans, policies and strategies; financial support; top management support; line manager’s commitment and involvement; and integration between HRD and HRM activities.

8.2 Plans, Policies and Strategies

The effectiveness of the HRD role depends on how HRD plans and policies are integrated into the strategies of the organisation. The participants admitted that they had written annual plans for their HRD activities. As a manpower development manager stated:

‘We make training and development plans every year at the beginning of the annual budget. Also, we try to make the plan in conformity with financial aspects. These plans are approved by the training & scholarship committee in the Ministry. The chairman of the committee and its members are always supportive to T&D activities. We implement the civil service and IPA policy’ (P1).
This comment suggests HRD activities are driven by budget constraints and the policies of public agencies. In the same vein, a training manager in one of the big public agencies explained their training planning process in the following comment:

‘We send some copies of forms to each department in the organisation in order to get them filled by the employees about which training programmes they want to attend. The direct manager approves them then we make our plans according to the information that is presented in this form’ (P18).

From the above quotations, it is clear that the HRD managers prepare a T&D plan for each financial year and they have to obtain top management approval for such plans before implementation. They also mentioned that these plans require the financial support and approval of top management for each plan, which can be seen as encouragement for HRD activities in these organisations. Also, public organisations implement the Civil Service training and scholarship policy. However, if an individual organisation has its own policy, it is usually unwritten policy. The second quotation explained the involvement of the heads of department in preparing plans. However, this means the number of employees who receive training is, as mentioned in the previous chapter, subject to the opinion of the head of department and not based on actual training needs, as noted by the following OD director who had been working in the organisation for 21 years, when he said:

‘A lack of training and development plans that are based on training needs which is considered as the cornerstone of training process. So you can find some employees who haven’t attended any training programmes for more than 20 years’ (P15).

These written plan documents include numbers of intended trainees, without employees’ names, positions, and departments, as one participant stated regarding HRD plans:
‘Our training plan is not a detailed plan but it includes figures and the number of trainees only. It does not reflect the reality and the actual organisation requirements’ (P9).

Similarly when describing the content of this written document another participant added:

‘Training plans don’t include everything except figures to decorate the organisational achievement report at the end of the year. So we can say that we’ve trained this or that number of employees. We exaggerate, saying that we train a big number of employees and we are happy to put it in our report. The number is important but we should concentrate on quality’ (P6).

This raises the question of the basis on which plans are approved, since there is no indication of exactly who will be trained and in what areas. Consequently, linkage to overall organisation strategies must be in doubt.

Both participants 9 and 6 raised their concern about the absence of a rational approach to HRD, as a result of which the plans are subjective and include only figures which the top management want to include in their annual achievement reports. These comments support the previously quoted view that HRD plans are not realistic and not based on actual needs. These participants found it frustrating to work without detailed plans for their T&D activities because they had to deal with abstract numbers without knowing who would be nominated for training and where and whether such training would enable these employees to advance their career. HRD plans should include short-term and long-term skills needed for the organisation, based on a vision of the direction in which the organisation is headed. The absence of this kind of information in the HRD plans makes HRD practice detached from organisational realities and may result in employees receiving irrelevant or outdated training.

Another participant in a major ministry in the Kingdom pointed out that:
All our training plans are presented as figures in order to get financial support but we don’t implement them because they are wishes. Unfortunately, the plans focus mainly on training the employees of the ministry’s head office while the other branches are given little attention because they are remote from the training centres which are located in the main cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Therefore, employees who work in Jeddah and Dammam can easily attend training courses, while it is very difficult in the remote areas’ (P2).

In the above quotation, the word ‘wishes’ is used by this participant to indicate that there is often a gap between the figures, and the reality of what then does or does not happen. Also, the participant raised an important issue when he stated that the ministry’s plan focuses mainly on the ministry headquarters. This means that there is an inequality of opportunities among the employees in the same organisation. As a result, some who work in different branches are not included in the ministry HRD plans and not given as much attention as those who work in the same building as top management. This suggests that factors such as locational practicality, status or “visibility”, rather than organisation strategies, shape HRD plans.

Another participant who has more than 27 years of experience criticised the impractical, unrealistic way of making plans, which he saw as typical of Saudi practice. In his words:

‘We (Saudis) get sentimental about making plans. For instance, we create ideals, but we fail in implementing them because we follow impractical methods in creating or making our plans. Therefore, the level of implementation of them [plans] is in the range of 10% to 20% and sometimes they are just set aside. So, we have to give consideration to our plans and the means that will support us in implementing them. Moreover, we have to co-operate with other countries and organisations in order to gain more experience regarding making of plans through providing benchmarking. So plans represent the guide that assists us in specifying our position and what we are going to achieve or perform’ (P23).

The above participant expressed his criticism of the way plans are developed, as it is not based on a realistic position; plans prepared in this way are doomed to failure. He saw a
need for a new, more realistic approach to planning which can be implemented, because there is a difference between dreams and reality. The plan should add value to the organisation. The aim of the HRD plan is, in theory, to guide the organisation to achieve its mission through design and implementation of the HRD plan, but as this participant and several others indicated, current planning practices are not conducive to this aim.

However, a few public organisations have well established HRD plans, as illustrated by this T&D director, who explained how HRD plans are developed in his organisation.

‘Everybody in my organisation participates and we put the final plan and get the approval from our CED and inform all top, middle and line managers about it. This plan is flexible so sometimes we add or change some elements of it.

I will tell you something regarding our plan. I did a study to determine the training needs of our employees. I found that the average age of our employees who hold a master degree is 55, so I thought immediately that developing a succession plan is a must and a strategic act for us. As this strategic goal is essential, I tried to get support from our CEO and I followed the procedure through the Committee for Training and Scholarship of Civil Service Employees, but these people don’t listen and our papers are still there, waiting to get approval’ (P21).

As this comment shows, even strategic awareness and good planning by the HRD department do not guarantee a favourable outcome. The same participant went on to say:

‘So, we have a yearly training and development plan, but the question is whether we implement it or not. The answer is not really, because as I have mentioned, the government regulations and red tape hinder us from improving our employees according to our plan (P21).

The above participant explained how the training plan is formulated and gets input from all stakeholders, especially from top management level. According to this participant’s comments, he is proactive, as shown by his interest in succession planning, because the lack of HRD could cause a serious shortage of internal qualified HR. Because of the implications of failure in this area, this participant expressed frustration regarding
government rules and bureaucracy, which resulted in inertia and inability to implement a plan which he saw as a strategic necessity. HRM policies for Saudi public organisations require the organisations to obtain the approval of the Training and Scholarship Committee for Civil Service Employees in the Ministry of Civil Service for sending any employee to attend training programmes or to obtain an academic degree from inside or outside the Kingdom. In other words, this committee approves the training and scholarship plans for public organisations. The procedure in this committee was criticised by most of the participants for being bureaucratic and inflexible. Also, when this participant used the words ‘don’t listen’ to describe the reaction of the committee, it suggests that the committee is isolated from the public organisations. The committee’s intransigence suggests both a lack of effective two-way communication and, perhaps, a lack of awareness of or respect for the specialist expertise of the HRD department, whose advice is repeatedly ignored.

Also, a few participants mentioned that they did not have written plans in their organisations. For example, one participant shared with the researcher that ‘having a plan not yet solid’

In the same vein a manager of Training Department explained how they work without having a plan:

‘We don’t have plan for HRD in my organisation; T&D are conducted according to the available programmes from the IPA or other training centres. When we receive the IPA training programme’s plan and we circulate it to the organisation’s departments and branches and when

3 He said it in English
receive requests from employees, we contact the training centre to nominate them. Next year we are planning to have one, inshallah⁴ (P12).

This comment describes a reactive approach where the organisation’s T&D practices are shaped by outside forces rather than the organisation’s purposes.

Another important issue that was explored in this research is to investigate if HRD plans are integrated with the organisation plans. Garavan (1991) argues that for HRD to be strategic, it must formulate plans and policies and integrate them with the organisation plans. However, most of the participants saw their plans as operational plans rather than having a strategic focus. As one participant noted, ‘The training and development activities in the Ministry are not linked with specific strategies’ (P18).

Another T&D director made the same point when he explained the role of his department in developing plans in his setting:

‘Our HRD are short-term activities but not long-term activities that can contribute to the organisation’s strategy. Our department does not know anything about corporate plans from other departments in the organisation. So how can it be strategic?’ (P 10).

The above quotations draw attention to the restricted scope of the HRD plan as an operational and short-term plan. The participant indicated that there is no harmony between his department and the rest of departments in his organisation. He described his role as providing services of short-term activities to the organisation. In addition, a number of participants agreed that they did not play a role in organisation strategy or

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⁴ An Arabic term to indicate hope for an aforementioned event to occur in the future; it literally means “if God wills it”.

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planning. One planning and development manager with 22 years of experience in the field described the situation in public organisations in the following words:

‘The departments of training and development in the public sector don’t participate in making the organisations’ strategies and plans. This makes it difficult to transfer what has been learned from T&D into the workplace’ (P3).

Another participant with 29 years of experience in the field of training and scholarship raised concern about the lack of organisation strategy in the comment quoted below:

‘One and the most important [deficiencies] is lack of strategies for HRD because there aren’t clear strategies for the organisation. So, there is no clear direction and clear picture’ (P9).

Both participants expressed frustration over the lack of participation in making the organisation plan. In the first quotation, the participant viewed this as hindering the organisation from benefiting from the HRD activities. This participant was very aware, as he indicated, of the impact of this lack of departmental input on the development of the organisation. He was frustrated that his department was not considered when formulating the organisation plan. His department was forced to wait and react to the organisation plan. In the second quotation, the participant raised his concern that his organisation did not have a clear strategy to guide it in the future. Both participants indicated that they practised HRD as training in an ad hoc manner, without a clear focus and purpose and without knowing whether they were on the right track.

In view of the above situation, one participant criticized the government’s HRD strategy. In his words:

‘To be honest with you, we hear about HRD as a strategy for the government. But in reality no and we need many years to practise it as strategic. Most Gulf States, if they seriously took a strategic approach to HRD, then you would not see those foreign workers in the Gulf. The strategic position of HRD is not clear’ (P14).
The above participant’s comments reflect his dissatisfaction with the government strategy because it is not effective. He referred in his criticism to the ‘Saudization policy’ that the government launched in the early 1990s to replace non-Saudi workers with Saudi ones in order to reduce the number of the former, and similar nationalization policies in other states. The fact that these policies are so far from realization was, in his view, proof of the lack of a strategic approach to HRD. Presumably a strategic approach, in his view, would have made greater progress, by now, in developing local cadres with the required skills and knowledge to remove the need to depend on foreigners.

In this context it is worth noting that ever since the 1970s, the Saudi government has, with the aid of oil revenues, invested heavily in education and training at all levels. Examples include the dramatic increase in the number of universities, from eight to twenty-four, since 2005, and the “King Abdullah Scholarship Programmes” under which more than 90,000 young Saudi have been enabled to study abroad (AlRiyadh Newspaper, 2010c). Nevertheless, the idealistic rhetoric of national plans is not accompanied by clear guidelines for implementation. A close look at the history of education and training in the Kingdom shows overlapping of responsibilities between agencies, abolition or restructuring of institutions and programmes that failed to deliver satisfactory results and complaints from scholars and politicians alike of mismatch between the outputs of education and training and the actual needs of the job market(e.g. Madhi and Barrientos, 2003; Diwan and Girgis, 2002). All this suggests an incoherent strategy at central government level, which in turn is reflected in similar confusion in organisations.
In contrast, a few participants claimed that their HRD plays a strategic role. For example, one planning and HRD manager immediately replied to the researcher with the following comment:

‘Of course, HRD is a part of the corporation's general strategy. There is a section within the corporation’s strategy called “Our people”. And we promise our employees to grant them development and empowerment’ (P7).

Similarly, an OD manager in the healthcare sector expressed his view toward HRD’s role in his organisation:

‘I consider it as a strategic function and I try to set a strategy that aims to make this hospital become a “learning organisation”. And I think that every employee has the right to attend training programmes and this is a strategy that we are going to assure via practising HRD. Also, I want to automate the hospital work. I want to introduce an e-file for each patient’ (P11).

Both participants acknowledged that they received enough support for their activity from their top management. The HRD in both organisations are well established and play an important role in the organisation. This role can be characterized as helping the organisation to achieve its goals. HRD in these organisations is different from the rest of public organisations because the department participates in the organisation plan, rather than simply reacting to it. Another participant from another organisation that has a well-established HRD department expressed clearly that he aspired to a similar situation. In his words:

‘The awareness of the top management promises a better future. I really cannot wait to see T&D as priority in my organisation. I want T&D to be a strategic tool for formulating the organisation’s strategy. I think with the full support of the top management we will move in the right direction’ (P23).

The above participant revealed that attaining the position of having HRD at a strategic level was at present little more than a dream, although he expressed hope that the
support and commitment of the top management would eventually lead to its realization.

The data gathered from the questionnaire survey revealed that the majority (73 per cent) of the respondents said that their organisations had formal (written) plans, which are important to be translated into a framework of written policies; however, only 33 per cent of the organisations claimed to have formal policies. The remaining 67 per cent operated without written policies or depending on the government policy for HRD or training and scholarship. Also, 33.9 per cent of the public organisations indicated that they had written HRD strategies and the remaining 66.1 per cent said that they did not have formal (written) strategies.

However, the interviews revealed, as the participants’ comments suggested, that even organisations that have formal HRD plans prepare them largely as a management exercise or as McCracken and Wallace (2000, p.445) described it as ‘a necessary evil’. From the above we can conclude that the majority of public organisations in Saudi Arabia have annual written HRD plans for their organisations. However, these plans are presented in abstract statistical terms without details on priorities. They do not include who, how, when and where as recommended by McCracken and Wallace (2000). This raised the need for public officials to be encouraged to attend training programmes on planning and strategic management applications, as Al-Hamadi et al. (2007) recommended to Oman’s managers. These plans are first formulated in the HRD/T&D departments, then submitted to the training and scholarship committee and finally approved by top management.

In addition, in the view of most of the participants, there is no clear determined HRD strategy that is integrated with the overall organisation’s strategies. The majority of the
participants attributed this lack of planning, policy and strategy to the absence of expertise, which restricts the role of the practitioners to delivering and coordinating T&D programmes as passive providers. Only a few organisations have clear strategies for developing their HR. Interestingly, at national level, the Majils Ash-Shura has heavily criticised the HRD strategy within the National Development Plans for not being realistic and for not including details of how it will implemented (Alriyadh newspaper, 2010d). This situation at the macro level (central government) is reflected at the micro level (individual public sector organisations). These findings are consistent with other studies, for example, Al-Hamadi et al. (2007), who conclude that the contribution of HRD to strategy building in Oman’s organisations is not of a high level. In contrast with this study’s finding, McCracken and Wallace (2000) found in their study about SHRD in public and private organisations in the Lothians and central Scotland, that there was clear evidence for linkage of HRD with the corporate strategy. However, they noted that the role of HRD is much more as a supportive role rather than shaping the strategy. Having considered how HRD plans, policies and strategies formulated and as some of the participants indicated that their training plans were prepared for the purpose of obtaining financial support, this matter will be discussed in the following theme.

8.3 Financial Support

Financial support for HRD activities shows the commitment of any organisation toward the HRD function, because any plan needs funds to be implemented. Harrison and Kessels (2004) argued that the lack of HRD funds can hinder the HRD function from playing a strategic role. The participants realized the importance of the financial support in order to carry out HRD activities. However, most of them agreed that they did not
have enough funds to support these activities. As this manpower manager in a big ministry in the Kingdom indicated:

‘Lack of financial support is another obstacle because when we go to negotiate with the Ministry of Finance, the last thing to talk about is the training fund’ (P1).

Similarly, another participant described the view of the Ministry of Finance as follows:

‘Our budget approached 25.000.000 SR last year. It is increased annually, but unfortunately the Ministry of Finance has taken the view that training is a marginal element and a type of luxury or entertainment, and so should not be supported. This a common problem that public organisations face’ (P8).

The comments of both participants reflect the fact that most public organisations face problems when negotiating their yearly budget with the Ministry of Finance. Neither of them were satisfied with the view and procedure of the Ministry of Finance. It is clear from the quotations that the Ministry of Finance consider T&D in the public organisations as a cost rather than a long term investment. The public organisations consequently face budgetary restrictions when it comes to developing their employees. It is seen as not a priority in their budgetary agenda. An OD manager raised this issue in the following terms:

‘The Training budget is at the bottom of their priority; therefore, an insignificant budget is allocated for training and development functions. The priority goes to the operational function. Inadequate funding for training and development is a major obstacle to meeting our objectives. As you know, the training centres are far away in Riyadh. This costs us because we pay for transportation by air and some expenses to help the employees with their accommodation’ (P19).

The above participant expressed his dissatisfaction with the existing view toward the HRD function. The lack of financial support was seen as an obstacle to implementing HRD activities and meeting its objectives, because HRD activities are not a top priority for the Ministry of Finance. The above quotation and those before raised the issue that HRD in public organisations is under pressure and usually suffers from a tight budget.
As participant 19 indicated, T&D is sacrificed at the expense of more immediate and obvious operational concerns. T&D activity is seen as just spending money without a tangible result, reflecting failure to take a long-term view of the organisation’s needs. In the absence of clear criteria to allocate T&D funds for the public organisations, some participants believed that the amount of money received for HRD activities depended on the power of the head of the organisation as one OD in one of the ministry in the Kingdom explained:

‘\textit{Sometimes the head of the organisation can play an essential role in supporting the T&D financially, so if he [the Minister] has power to influence the Ministry of Finance definitely he will get more financial support}’ (P5).

This comment suggests that personal considerations, rather than a strategic view of the organisation’s future needs, govern funding decisions.

In this connection, it is interesting to recall the negotiation technique described by an experienced Manpower Development manager, cited in a previous chapter (section 7.3).

His comments suggested that the response public organisations deal typically receive from the Ministry of Finance resulted in the organisation resorting to a rather cynical process in which negotiators played a bargaining game, the Ministry automatically cutting any figure requested and the organisation inflating its requirements to allow for this, so that the figures discussed bore no relationship to the organisation’s actual needs.

Some other participants declared that they had a sufficient budget to carry out the HRD activities, but that top management attitudes prevented them from taking full advantage of the funds available. In this context a Planning and Development manager stated:

‘\textit{We spent about 20 per cent of our yearly budget. That is because our top management does not believe in the importance of T&D for the}’
employees. When they want to support any department in the organisation, they take from our budget’ (P3).

Another participant reported a similar practice when he said:

‘The top management, when they want to fund any project, they look at the training budget and transfer the training money to another project and this gives an indication that training and development is not really a priority’ (P19).

Both the above participants raised the issue of the top management support, which is key to the success of any HRD activities (and will be discussed further, later). The practices described reflect the traditional view of T&D as spending rather than investment, and also, raise concerns about the status of the HRD function in the organisation. Some top managers apparently viewed the T&D budget as a general organisation resource that could be plundered at will to serve objectives that had higher priority in their thinking. Such behaviour suggests a lack of awareness that T&D might itself have strategic value to the organisation and that the budget is intended to serve a specific function. The situation is even more difficult when, as is often the case, the managers of HRD departments are excluded from the budget-setting process and so have no opportunity to assert their needs and defend their departments’ position (see for example, the comments of participant P12 quoted in Chapter Seven, section 7.3 regarding his lack of involvement in setting training and development financial resources and the negative impact he thought this had on the training and development role).

Not only did participants have to contend with an insufficient budget but also they were excluded from decisions that affected their department’s function directly. Such marginalization of T&D highlights the lack of linkage with broader organisational concerns.
In contrast, some of the participants mentioned that they had enough budget for their HRD activities and they received what they needed. A director of a Planning and Development department pointed out:

‘We are starting to send some employees on scholarships for the first time. In our plan for this year, we will send nine of our employees to study abroad. The budget increased from 2 million to 4 million this year’ (P23).

Along similar lines, a Training manager expressed his satisfaction with his department’s budget when he said:

‘The budget for developmental training approaches 112 millions. It is a good budget; we receive support from the top management. My organisation is very concerned about HRD’ (P13).

Another OD participant described how and why his budget had increased. In his words:

‘We started with 400,000 SR as an initial budget which increased to 4,000,000 SR after we convinced them [top management] about the importance of training and development programmes. They offered us funds and employees. And even the top manager at the ministry supports us’ (P22).

The above participants expressed their satisfaction with the funds they received to carry out their HRD activities, and highlighted the issue of top management support, which enabled them to get the needed funds. However, the comment by participant 22 shows another side to the story; the responsibility of HRD departments to explain and demonstrate their role and value to the organisation. Support is not automatic but must be earned. An interesting issue to emerge from the interviews concerned the different approaches of participants in this respect. Some realized the need for self-advocacy in order to garner support, and demonstrated the ability to do this; others simply showed their frustration with the status quo, but failed to realize the need to do so, or because they lacked the required skills.
From the above we can conclude that some Saudi public organisations’ T&D budget has continued to increase, especially in recent years with the increase of oil revenue. Some of this increase was made because public organisations have increased their scholarships for employees to pursue higher education abroad. Thus, the T&D budget depends partly on national considerations such as government revenues and human resources policies. However, some participants revealed that when top management want money for other departments or projects, they plunder the T&D budget. Also, despite the support of the government for HRD in the public sector, some participants declared that their organisations did not get enough financial support for their HRD activities and they accused the Ministry of Finance of not making employees’ T&D a priority, and though the allocation of money depends on the power and influence of the top management. Thus, the majority of interviewees were dissatisfied with their budget and blamed the government (Ministry of Finance), their own top management or both for the situation. Only rarely did a participant report success in convincing management, not only that HRD needed money, but also that such spending would bring a valuable return to the organisation.

These findings are consistent with those of the questionnaire survey, where just over half of respondents thought that HRD in their organisations did not receive the appropriate financial budget allocations, while less than half of the respondents thought they received the appropriate budget. However, 45.2 per cent of the participants reported receiving a higher HRD budget compared with the previous year, while 49.6 per cent said that their budget had remained the same.

The findings are in line with earlier research in this area. For example, Ali (1999) reported that a little more than half of government organisations in Kuwait had a
sufficient training budget. Abdullah (2009d) found that manufacturing firms in Malaysia were spending only modestly on HRD activities. Al-Hamadi et al. (2007) found that Oman’s organisations do not have sufficient funds to support HRD programmes. A vital factor in the financial resources allocated to HRD is likely to be the attitude of top management towards this function. The extent of top management support will therefore be explored next.

8.4 Top management Support

Many authors emphasise the importance of top management support and commitment toward HRD activities (for example, Garavan, 1991; 1995; McCracken and Wallace, 2000; Walton, 1999). Success in implementing HRD plans depends on the understanding and support of top management. In this study, mixed feelings were found among participants regarding this issue some perceived top management as posing an obstacle to implementation of HRD while others thought their managers were supportive and encouraging. In the latter category, a manager of Manpower and Development stated regarding the role of top management in his organisation:

‘The top management gives great consideration to the training and development programmes. Some managers regard training as an investment, like investment in buildings etc. And I consider it a basic requirement and the Governor and his deputy look at it as a part of their responsibility in our organisation’ (P4).

The above participant valued the great support that he received from the top management in his organisation. He emphasised the economic value and significance of HRD, as reflected in his use of the term ‘investment’, which usually implies a return. He described the investment in HR as analogous to investment in building, reflecting a view of HR as assets rather than a cost. What the top management do toward HRD will play a significant role in creating a learning environment for the organisation, and it is
noteworthy that this informant reported the sense of responsibility or obligation felt by his seniors towards this issue. In other words, effective HRD was seen as a necessary element of good organisation management.

In the same vein a training manager described the role of top management in his organisation in the following comment:

‘The top management supports investment in human capital, therefore, it encourages employees to attend training courses or programmes. I am very close to the top management and I know that they don’t have any reservation or objection to the HRD activities. Besides, they call for intense training courses whether in K.S.A or overseas’ (P13).

The above participant was reported in the previous section (8.3) as saying that the T&D budget in his organisation was 112 million Saudi Riyals, which is considered to be very high, especially as they had only 9000 employees. This suggests his top management went beyond “no observation or objection” to active and generous support. This experience is evidence that a supportive environment exists when the top management are committed to HRD activities and understand its role in the success of the organisation. Clearly, in this organisation, top management championed HRD activities and the organisation benefited from this commitment.

Another Planning and Development manager emphasized the top management commitment to T&D in these words:

‘The top management in my organisation support the activities of training and development. It would be no exaggeration to say it performs training and development activities on a daily basis, especially those concerned with the members of the organisation. Moreover, His Excellency the General Director participates in training and developmental programmes. Every employee has the right to attend training and developing courses. Our employees feel that T&D is for everybody (P16).
The above participant highlighted his CEO’s personnel commitment, demonstrated by his own attendance of training programmes. Moreover, the report that T&D activities take place on a ‘daily basis’ shows a vigorous role for this function in his organisation, which may be related to its centralized position. Moreover, involvement made the top management understand and support the T&D activities and believe in the importance of HRD activities to the success of the organisation. With this kind of support, the HRD department received the facilities they needed, including financial support and solving problems. An important point here is the respondent’s assertion that employees feel ‘T&D is for everybody’; in other words, it had taken root as an acknowledged and vital part of the organisation culture.

In contrast, some participants expressed their dissatisfaction at lack of support from the top management for their HRD activities. An OD manager expressed his experience of a negative top management attitude toward HRD activities:

‘Some of the top management in my organisation do not value training programmes and they think that the employees are enjoying themselves and having good time, so when they want money for another function in the organisation, the first thing they think of is the T&D fund’ (P20).

Similarly, one planning and development manager expressed his frustration when he said:

‘Unfortunately, our top management doesn't pay attention to training. Besides, it doesn't believe in the importance of training’ (P3).

He went on to express his desire for a better future in the public organisations when he asserted:

‘I would love to see top management in our public organisations realize the importance of HRD and improve its function. If they do so, I am sure we will be in a healthier situation in the future than we are currently’ (P3).

From the above comments, some organisations suffer from the lack of support and commitment from the top management toward HRD activities, which is reflected in the
funds allocated to HRD activities. Also, because top management are not convinced of
the value of HRD, they feel free to divert its budget to other purposes. These top
managers underestimate the potential effect of HRD activity on the organisation and so
do not see the need for T&D programmes. Without the commitment of the top
management, the HRD practitioners feel powerless to implement their activities, so
unsupportive top managers’ doubts will appear to be confirmed, as HRD benefits will
not be realized.

Thus, the interviewees’ comments present a mixed picture. Some of the HRD
practitioners in Saudi public organisation believed that they received enough support
and commitment from the top management toward HRD activities. They perceived that
the top management had gradually come to acknowledge the importance of the HRD
function. This finding is in line with the findings gathered from the questionnaire
survey, where almost 86 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement, “Senior
management are totally supportive towards HRD issues”. This finding is consistent with
other studies; for example Al-Ali (1999) found that more than sixty of public
organisations in Kuwait agreed that top management were committed to T&D activities.
Also, McCracken and Wallace (2000) concluded in their Scottish study that there was
strong evidence for top management commitment and support for HRD. Nevertheless,
in a significant minority of the Saudi public organisations studies here, top management
commitment was still seen as unsatisfactory and as undermining the role of HRD within
the organisation. Similarly, obstacles might be presented towards down the
organisational hierarchy, at line manager level, as the next section shows.
8.5 Line manager’s commitment and involvement

Line managers play a major role in the organisational hierarchy and have an important effect on the service in public organisations (McGuire et al., 2008). The success of any HRD function depends on the active involvement of line managers who must fully understand, support and implement the system. Consequently the learning process must include employees and managers from various levels of the organisation. The majority of interview participants emphasised that the line managers in their organisations were not fully involved in HRD issues, which made the release of employees to attend T&D programmes difficult. This was clearly explained by this manpower development manager:

‘Some managers don’t give their employees an opportunity for attending training courses or programmes because they believe that if the employee leaves, the work in his department will be prevented or delayed’ (P4).

Similarly, another participant in one of the major agencies in the Kingdom described how some employees suffer from the line managers’ attitudes:

‘Some employees are deprived from attending training programmes due to the mentality of their managers. These managers believe that if they send their employees on training programme; it may affect the work in the department. I remember one manager said to me, who will do the employee’s job when he is out for a training programme, or do you want me to do it?’ (P 14).

The comments of both participants reflect the fact that most line managers’ focus on work load and short-term work pressures; because these line managers are under pressure to achieve short-term targets, they put aside the employees’ T&D, which creates a conflict of priorities. The reluctance to release the employees to participate in T&D programmes affects the organisation and the employees, in the longer term.
Another OD director gave further reasons for lack of support when he described different types of line managers’ attitudes toward T&D programmes. He said:

‘Some managers don’t encourage their employees to attend T&D programmes because they are afraid that if they give him (the employee) an opportunity for developing himself, he will get promotion, so he may replace him [the manager] and take his position. Also, there is another type of manager who doesn’t believe in T&D. These managers are “the enemy of training” (P5).

The above participant mentioned that some managers are afraid of developing his employees because if they have the skills and knowledge that required in the department, they may have chance for promotion; thus, manager feel their own position and power are threatened by training and development of subordinators and seek to perpetuate the status quo. The second type of manager he described is the ‘enemy of training’, a very powerful expression, which indicates that some line managers are not merely unconvinced or unsupportive, but are actively hostile towards training. The use of this expression indicates the frustration this participant felt toward discouraging behaviour from some managers in his organisation.

These discouraging attitudes of line managers toward HRD activities can be a result of misunderstanding of the role of HRD within the organisation, as this Training and Scholarship manager explained:

‘Our problem with the line managers is that they are not cooperative due to their misconception of training values. They think that training and development is a chance for promotion and not a tool to improve employees’ effectiveness’ (P9).

From the above participant, it is clear that some line managers misunderstand the value of HRD activities in the organisation, in terms of enhancing employees’ long-term contribution to organisation goals. Indeed, by denying employees training opportunities, such managers may actually reduce the likelihood of their retention in the organisation.
As Hay (2002) found, the best employees are most likely to leave their organisations if their skills and talent are not being developed.

Despite this generally gloomy picture, a few participants viewed line managers in their organisations as supportive and encouraging. As one Planning and Development manager described:

‘Some managers value the importance of T&D. They encourage their employees to attend T&D programmes because they are aware of the impact of T&D on their skills, promotion, and spirits’ (P16).

Such awareness was sometimes achieved through endeavours by the HRD staff themselves. An OD manager described the efforts he had made to convince these managers of the importance of T&D, as follows:

‘I encourage the managers to attend in-house training courses, especially computer programmes, because I need to change their mentality about T&D programmes. We succeeded in making them adhere to the computer, which has a positive effect on their work, and they have begun to give great consideration to training activities’ (P22).

The above participant took a proactive role by inviting the line managers to attend training programmes, so they could experience the training and see the output of it on their skills. Cleverly, he focused initially on computer courses, this being an area likely to be of interest to managers and one where the benefits of training could be readily transferred and clearly apparent in their work. Once they had come to appreciate the benefit of training in one area, they could be more likely to recognize its value to the organisation more widely. In this way the OD manager convinced them by practice to support the HRD department and to reduce their resistance to the T&D efforts. This suggests that line managers need to be convinced to appreciate the value of HRD activities, which in turn means that HRD/OD managers need advocacy skills, practical
ability and strategic thinking in order to carve out a role for themselves in the organisation.

From the above we can conclude that the support and commitment of line managers in Saudi public organisation is low regarding to the willingness to release their employees to attend T&D programmes and they generally prefer to focus on the operational work. This finding is consistent with the finding of Watson and Maxwell (2007), that the two main barriers to obtaining line managers support the HRD activities are ‘heavy workload and short-term job pressures’ (p.38). Also, this finding is consistent with the findings of McCracken and Wallace (2000), who described getting line managers’ involvement in HRD issues as a battle and argued that they usually give priority to other operational concerns. Garavan et al. (1993) suggest that there is a lack of trust between line managers and T&D specialists which can be manifested in their refusal to cooperate with the training practitioners. It is also important to mention that most line managers in Saudi public organisations have come to these positions through experience on the job, rather than training and qualifications; therefore, they lack managerial skills. Harrison and Kessels (2004) agree that line managers are poorly equipped and unmotivated to be involved in HRD activities or share responsibility for evaluating its impact. In this regard Heraty and Morley (1995) concluded that managers who received less training and education are less likely to indentify and endorse the need for their subordinates to be trained. However, the questionnaire survey revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that the line managers in their organisation were involved in HRD issues. This can be attributed to the fact that line managers play a significant role in nominating and selecting employees to participate in T&D programmes and the
organisations rely on their judgement, as discussed earlier in the previous chapter (section 7.4.2).

A key issue raised in this section has been the short term, operational focus of line managers. Failure to recognize the long-term benefits of HRD in relation to organisational goals have implications for its relationship with other functions and activities in the organisation. This issue came to the fore in participants’ comments on the relationship between HRD and HRM, to which, now turn.

### 8.6 Integration between HRD and HRM activities

Almost all Saudi public organisations have separate HRD departments, as mentioned in section 7.2. Also, for the huge majority of organisations HRD was not part of the HRM/personnel department division (section 7.2, 7.2.1 in the previous chapter). Because of this situation, most of the participants worked without integrating with the personnel department. In the words of a Training and Scholarship manager, who had spent many years in the HRD field in different organisations:

‘Our relations with the Personnel Affairs department are not as expected. We don’t have records or information about the employees and their specializations; also we don’t have a database that includes all this information regarding each employee and his employment. They don’t allow us to access their data. So, I can say we are not happy about that’ (P9).

Another participant reported a similar situation when he said:

‘There is no relation between our departments and personnel departments and we don’t inform them about the sessions that will be held T&D programmes. But if the trainee wants payment of expenses we forward his application to them. Also [we inform them], when the trainees finish their training’ (P5).

The above comments both reflect the common situation in public organisations, which view the HRD and HRM functions as separate not only physically but also functionally.
This lack of integration between the two functions makes the activities of HRD isolated from other personnel activities (for example recruitment and selection, performance appraisal and reward). The system in Saudi public organisations is that for employees to speed up their promotion, they need to attend some training programmes. However, these T&D programmes depend on the employees’ effort because there is a lack of formal policy to link management promotion with particular T&D programmes. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, having performance appraisal does not mean that T&D is included as one aspect of evaluation. In the absence of such linkage, HRD departments had no clear idea of employees’ abilities and needs, but were organising courses, or arranging attendance at the IPA, in the absence of the very information needed to ensure that training was relevant, appropriate and targeted to the right employees.

Other interviewees, however, described a more favourable situation. One participant described the relation between both departments in his organisation, as follows:

“We have close relations with the Personnel Department and daily coordination through communicating whether by e-mail or telephone, or through direct contacts, because when an employee is selected for training courses, his documents should be forwarded to Personnel Affairs, especially for overseas training courses or scholarships in order to complete the administrative work. Also, we have access to the employees’ database which is in the Personnel department’ (P16).

The above participant described the best practice between both departments. He viewed the relationship as close, with contact on a daily basis. Also, his department had access to the database of the employees, which is unusual as personnel departments traditionally view this information as confidential. However, this co-operation between both departments does not necessarily take place at the strategic level of the organisation, but is more operational. The above comments indicate that the role of the
personnel department is to focus on administrative work and legislative issues. Another OD manager, with a master degree in public management, proposed a suggestion for better integration between the two functions, as he said:

‘I think both of them, HRD and personnel (because we don’t have HRM) are related because both are about people in the organisation. Therefore, they should be under one ceiling and communicate on a daily basis. But if you ask me about our current practice, we work with them when the employees want to travel to attend training programmes, because the personnel department issues their tickets and completes their paperwork (P19).

The above participant suggested that for better integration, both departments should be combined structurally. Even in a situation where they are under the same division, however, with an unclear strategy for them, the HRD department will continue to do T&D work and the personnel department will do personnel work. In one case, an OD manager revealed that sometimes clashes occurred between his department and personnel department as he said, ‘We are the voice of the employees and they are the voice of the regulations’ (P8).

From the above findings, we can conclude that there is weak integration between HRD and personnel departments. This make the HRD function isolated in practice in Saudi public organisations, and undermines efforts to create a supportive learning environment. The link between the two departments is largely confined to handling paperwork and managing the bureaucratic issues and administrative decisions made by the other departments. Similarly, the questionnaire survey revealed that less than half of the respondents agreed that training and personnel activities are integrated with each other, and those who thought they were integrated probably answered from an administrative and bureaucratic perspective rather than a strategic aspect. This finding is consistent with previous studies that cast doubt on whether such integration exists in
reality. For example McCracken and Wallace (2000) reported that the evidence for strategic partnership between HRD and HRM was not strong. Also, Abdalla and Al-Homoud (1995) concluded that training in Kuwait’s organisations stands alone with no link with other HRM functions such as selection procedures, performance appraisal and reward system.

In light of the above it could be contended that HRD is not yet fully viewed as a strategic concept within Saudi public organisations. SHRD practice varies in some situations in Saudi public organisations. This seems to be the case, despite the fact that virtually all public organisations include in their structure specific HRD departments. With reference to this situation, Walton (1999) pointed out that SHRD does not seem to exist in practice as many authors defined it. Also, he mentioned that there are numerous reasons to account for the lack of SHRD in many organisations. These might include lack of clearly defined strategic objectives related to HRD or a badly designed HRD plan. For many organisations HRD costs can be prohibitively high or alternatively an organisation might fail to analyse correctly its HRD needs. Harrison (1997) argues that if there is a lack of expertise, awareness and articulacy among HRD practitioners, insufficient integration between HRD and other personnel practitioners, and failure to involve line managers, then SHRD is virtually non-existent. Anderson (2009) concludes in her study that alignment as described in SHRD literature is neither achievable nor even desirable. In this study it should be noted that in the majority of Saudi public organisations, T&D continues to be implemented reactively to their needs in the short term. According to Armstrong (2009) HRD should be approached systematically, as this is more effective in terms of meeting the objectives of the organisation. If T&D is carried out on an ad hoc basis of short programmes designed
to meet specific short-term needs, this approach will impair the performance of the organisation and it will fail to meet its objectives. This outcome is more likely if T&D does not have the support of top management and line managers.

Apparently such a situation exists in many Saudi public sector organisations, where it is rare to find a proactive and planned approach to training and development. As a consequence, many of the public organisations view training as a one-off event and not as an ongoing process. HRD/OD departments are playing an operational and implementation role. This situation makes the HRD practitioners in Saudi public organisations passive providers or as Walton (1999, p.84) described it, ‘guardians of systems and processes that others have devised’. Similarly in the West, Harrison (1997) emphasises that ‘research has failed to reveal any significant connection between HRD and business strategy across UK organisations at large’ (p.25).

There was a department allocated for HRD activities in the majority of Saudi public organisations, and yet, despite this provision, there were no clearly defined strategies. For purposes of T&D evaluation, the focus tended to be on the level of reaction from trainees. Many of the T&D programmes take place outside of the organisation, most often in the Institute of Public Administration. Having said this, it should also be noted that a number of big and successful organisations do acknowledge the importance of T&D. However, for these organisations the importance of HRD and the support of the top and line managers are not characterized clearly in terms of SHRD criteria.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the extent to which HRD in the participants’ organisations can be considered strategic, for example, whether and how it was planned for and
whether such plans were integrated with wider organisational objectives; funding; the support of top and line managers, and integration with HRM activities.

It was found that most organisations had some sort of written plan and policy, but often these were expressed in abstract terms that bore little relation to organisational reality; for example an intended number of trainees might be planned, but with no indication of who needed to be trained, in what skills, for what purposes. This lack of clear focus was reflected in funding decisions, which often seemed to be swayed by personal and political considerations as much as by organisational need. Many participants were as a result regularly beaten down in the annual bargaining process or forced to accommodate to decisions from which they had been excluded. Whilst some top managers were supportive of HRD, others frequently sacrificed it to short-term priorities, raiding the HRD budget to support other departments and objectives. Similar short-termism could result in line managers’ refusal to release employees for training, the immediate disruption this might cause obscuring any vision of long-term benefit. In this situation, it was not surprising to find that HRD was not properly integrated with HRM. In some organisations, secretiveness about employees’ data forced HRD departments to plan and publicize training courses with no clear idea of who they were planning for; even when regular contact with personnel was reported, it seemed to be largely for the purposes of administrative processing.

A key theme emerging throughout the chapter was the contrast between dreams or rhetoric and reality. At both government and organisational level, lofty ideas and grand-sounding strategies were undermined by a lack of hard data and clear implementation planning. Consequently, plans and policies that should have been directed towards identified organisational needs and goals were vulnerable to a host of external forces
and organisational constraints. Whilst some HRD practitioners had taken a proactive
stance, successfully using bargaining, advocacy and practical demonstration to assert
their role in the organisation and garner support, others presented themselves as more
reactive; having ideals and aspirations but tailoring their practice in response to forces
outside their control. From what has been reported in this chapter, it appears that HRD
in public organisations, as in government planning, is strategic in intention (and
certainly the interview participants aspired to such a role) but not in reality, a situation
that can be ascribed to a variety of cultural, political and organisational challenges. The
next chapter, which concludes the thesis, will highlight these challenges, synthesizing
the findings from this and the preceding chapters.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This study has explored the concept, practice and strategy of HRD in Saudi Arabian public organisations. HRD in the Middle East generally has hitherto been under-researched; this study therefore sought to contribute to both theory and practice by investigating how HRD – which is Western in origin – is enacted in a novel cultural context. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, with participants from every type of public organisation operating in Saudi Arabia today: ministries; presidencies, councils and bureaus; local government organisations; independent departments and public agencies; commissions, and public universities and training institutions.

This chapter offers conclusions based on a summary of the main research findings, concerning how HRD is conceptualized in Saudi public organisations, how it is actually practised, and how far it can be considered strategic. Based on these findings, the fourth research question, concerning the challenges facing HRD in these organisations, is addressed. Implications of the research for theory, practice and research methods are suggested. The limitations of the research are reflected on, and suggestions made for future research that could overcome the acknowledged limitations and build on the contribution of this work. Brief concluding remarks offer a succinct statement of the research outcome and its potential value.

9.2 Summary of Main Findings

In this section the key findings reported in Chapters 5-8 will be summarized, highlighting the insights in response to the first three research questions; the fourth
question will be addressed by synthesis and interpretation of these findings in a later section.

The questionnaire survey, reported in Chapter 5, provided a foundation of basic data on the nature of the organisations and their staff, key HRD practices, and perceptions of problems and challenges. It was revealed that HRD was normally performed by a distinct entity located at directorate or department level within the organisation. Generally, the higher level the organisation, the higher the status of HRD, reflected in the designation of the department concerned, and in reporting structures. Respondents were well-educated, but few had specialized in HRM or a related discipline. Specialisms included such diverse areas as accounting, agriculture and history, although a number of participants had graduated in public and business administration - the most relevant specialism. Key HRD practices such as training needs assessment and performance evaluation were said to be regularly performed, perhaps as a consequence of the organisations’ being subject to Civil Service regulations; however, frequency varied and a wide range of motivations and methods was reported, some of which were inconsistent with good practice as presented in the literature. For example, training was rarely provided to new recruits, although as noted by Kenney and Reid (1988) one of the benefits of training is to enable employees to learn their jobs quickly and effectively, while Garavan et al. (1995) identify training of new recruits as increasingly necessary, given the difficulty organisations face in recruiting people with the requisite skills and experience. Nor was training much used to overcome weaknesses diagnosed in performance appraisal. This is contrary to the widely expressed assertion (e.g. McClelland, 1993) that training should be based on clear identification of individual and organisational needs, and with the idea of the “training gap” put forward by Armstrong
(2001) in his ‘Deficiency model approach’ (see section 2.2). Fewer than half the organisations reported having strategies to reward high performance, or discussing performance with employees.

The survey results pointed to four main challenges facing HRD in the perception of respondents: skills shortage among the staff of HRD/T&D departments; failure of employees to transfer learning from HRD programmes to the workplace; the adverse impact of over-centralization and government regulations; and challenges to training provision and take-up posed by employees’ personal circumstances, such as family responsibilities. The first of these may be attributed to the developing status of HRD (McLean and McLean, 2001) and the shortage of managerial skills generally in the Arab states (Atiyyah, 1993a). The second, failure to transfer learning from T&D to the workplace, is a serious concern because it undermines one of the key purposes of training, that is, to improve organisation performance (Taylor, 1996). The problem is one that can be associated with external training where trainees are isolated from the actual work (Armstrong, 2001). It may also imply inadequate evaluation of training effectiveness (Mann, 1996; Stone, 2002), in particular, failure to extend evaluation beyond the ‘reaction’ to the ‘behaviour’ level (Hale, 2003) discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1. The other two challenges mentioned, over-centralization/government bureaucracy and interference of employees’ personal circumstances in their working life are structural and cultural factors that have been reported previously by both Western and Arab writers (e.g. Assad, 2002; Weir, 2003) in the context of the Middle Eastern states, as discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.
The information and issues highlighted in the survey were taken forward for in-depth exploration in interview with key informants in a variety of organisations, enabling the first three research questions to be addressed.

Regarding question one, concerning how HRD is conceptualized by practitioners in Saudi public organisations, findings focused on the perceived significance and value of HRD, and the purposes for which it was undertaken. The significance of HRD was thought to lie in four areas. HRD was seen as an investment in human capital which should bring an economic return, although doubts were raised as to whether or how such return could be recognized and measured. Chien (2007) espouses a similar notion, while Swanson and Holton III (2009) view human capital theory as one of the economic foundations of HRD. Investing in employee development was also seen as a way of increasing employees’ job satisfaction in the hope of retaining them in the organisation, consistent with the arguments of, among others, Kenney and Reid (1988), Acton and Golden (2003) and Wilson (2004). Another benefit to the organisation was seen to lie in having employees equipped for specific jobs and in particular addressing the imbalance between theoretical and practical knowledge, a view which can be related to the skills gap perspective put forward by Garavan et al. (1995) and discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2. Finally, it was suggested that HRD could have wider social benefits by making employees better able to contribute to their families and communities, and by helping in the achievement of government social policies such as Saudization. The latter is mentioned less frequently in the HRD literature than individual and organisation-level benefits. However, McLean and McLean (2001) and Wang and McLean (2007), as noted in section 2.3, extended their definitions of HRD to encompass community and national benefits. The particular emphasis on these community and national levels by
respondents in the Saudi context can be seen as a reflection of both the characteristics of the Saudi public sector, which typically of public sectors in the Gulf states is assigned a social welfare role (Common, 2008) and of the collectivist Arab culture (Hofstede, 2001; Al-Faleh, 1987; Mellahi, 2006), as discussed in Chapter 3. As for the goals and purposes underlying organisations’ HRD activities, two main rationales were given: improving employees’ competence and productivity in their jobs (compare, for example, Swanson, 1987; Smith, 1990, cited in Weinberger, 1998), and enabling organisations to keep pace with a dynamic environment, for example, changes in technology consistent with, among others, Armstrong (2001); Acton and Golden (2003); Berge et al. (2003) and Tseng and McLean (2008).

The findings, as indicated above, show similarities between the concept of HRD as perceived by Saudi practitioners and those found in Western literature, especially with regard to whole – person development. However, there were differences between the two in functional terms, arising from the different role of the government and differences in culture, which emerged more clearly in subsequent chapters addressing the second and third research questions. Such differences are to be expected, according to McLean and McLean (2001) who, as noted previously in discussion of the definition of HRD (section 2.3) noted that conceptualizations will be influenced by such matters as government interference, the value system of the country, and the stage of development HRD has reached within a given context.

The second question addressed by this research concerned how HRD is actually performed by public sector organisations, including its location and status within the organisation, as well as practice. The majority of organisations had a distinct HRD department or unit, reporting to top management. This gave HRD managers a degree of
access to the organisation’s decision-makers and had not only practical importance (for example for access to resources) but also symbolic importance as an indicator of support for the HRD function. In this connection, it is worth recalling Carnevale’s (1989) reporting of American employers’ commitment to -and spending on- training and development, as well as the arguments of Garavan et al. (1998) on the importance of top management support for HRD. Nevertheless, concerns were expressed that the HRD function is misunderstood as something “anyone can do”. Such a view contrasts strongly with the Western professional assumption that HRD professionals have access to privileged information (Swanson, 2009) and may perhaps be explained by the recent emergence of HRD in Saudi Arabia and the lack of a local professional organisation, both factors that can strongly influence the concept and practice of HRD (McLean and McLean, 2001). Lack of professional preparation in this field in Saudi universities can be seen as both a consequence of such a view, and a factor that contributes to perpetuate it.

The sense of being “misunderstood” was a current theme, also, in participants’ descriptions of HRD practice. They had aspirations to see HRD conducted fairly, objectively and systematically in a manner that brought the intended benefits to both employees and the organisation, consistent with the values and principles asserted in the HRD literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (for example, Taylor, 1996). In practice, however, they found themselves caught in a series of tensions between conflicting dynamics - for example between centralization and decentralization, and between traditional cultural values and modernization- which undermined their efforts. For example, TNA is based, not on objective evaluation of competences and job requirements, but on personal requests and manager recommendations, biased by “wastah”. Failure to conduct
objective, systematic TNA runs counter to the advice of Burrow and Berardinelli (2003) that training should address identified problems that management has to deal with, and the assertions of a plethora of other writers on the importance of effective TNA so that training is linked to individual and organisational needs and goals (McClelland, 1993; Armstrong, 2001). However, it is a common criticism among writers in the Arab context (Agnaia, 1996). The interference of personal connections and relationships, based on deeply rooted tribal and family values (Dadfar, 1993; Ali, 1995; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Harry, 2007) was a significant theme in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Another area where such tensions were reported was training provision. Many organisations are unable to provide in-house training tailored to their own needs, or perceive that government regulations prevent them from doing so. However, the IPA, the organisation officially responsible for training public sector employees, has insufficient capacity, its branches are geographically unevenly distributed and not accessible for all employees, and it provides general courses rather than the context-specific, targeted training needed. This is a dilemma which may have specific features in the Saudi context but also recalls the general dilemma of in-house versus external training highlighted by Armstrong (2001) and discussed in Chapter 2. Training evaluation is neglected altogether or confined to employee satisfaction surveys which give no indication of how training affects attitudes, skills and knowledge. Such surveys do not go beyond the first and most basic level of Kirkpatrick’s (1996) framework, outlined in the Literature Review, although it is important that evaluation should also consider employees’ knowledge retention, transfer of learning into work behaviour, and impact on organisational performance (Hale, 2003; O’Toole, 2009; ASTD, 2009b). Performance appraisal is conducted as a matter of form, but suffers from subjective bias.
and is not linked to T&D objectives, contrary to the advice of writers such as Stone (2002); this could be seen as both a contributory factor to, and an outcome of, a lack of a clear career development role within HRD, such as is described in Western literature (Van der Sluis and Poell, 2003; McDonald and Hite, 2005). Training, particularly overseas, is commonly perceived and used as a reward or holiday for favoured employees and those with “connections”, rather than a means of developing employee competencies and thereby enhancing organisation effectiveness. This reflects the previously reported view, common in Arab organisations, that training is an optional extra, rather than an integral part of organisation improvement efforts (Agnaia, 1996). Thus, the picture that emerges from these findings seems to support the network/actor model proposed by Garavan et al. (1998), which conceptualizes HRD as a dynamic network of interactions between diverse stakeholders who may have, to varying degrees, different values, roles and expectations in relation to HRD. Many respondents expressed frustration, and even despair at this contrast between the way they were forced by structural and cultural factors to practise, and the way they thought HRD ‘should’ be done.

In this regard, it is worth noting practitioners’ insistence that it was these factors, rather than lack of knowledge, that constrained their activities and indeed, they showed good understanding of the theory of HRD. This was somewhat surprising, given that few came from a HRD/HRM background, and reflects practitioners’ ongoing learning, in their own pursuit of personal and professional development.

The third research question asked to what extent HRD in the participants’ organisations can be considered strategic. In other words, it explored the extent to which conceptualizations and practice of HRD in Saudi public organisations reflected a wider
philosophy of HRD as shaping and supporting the strategies of the organisation as a whole (McIntyre, 2004). Issues addressed in this regard included whether HRD is planned for and integrated with wider organisational objectives, funding, support for HRD on the part of top and line managers, and integration between HRD and HRM activities. Once again, a contrast between ideal and reality was manifested. Government and organisations alike subscribed in rhetoric to a discourse of strategic HRD. In practice, however, external forces and organisational constraints undermined the intention to direct HRD towards organisational and national needs and goals. The lack of clarity was manifested in plans that stated the target number of employees to be trained, without reference to the specific needs or purposes the training should fulfil, automatic bargaining-down of funding requests and a tendency to “steal” from the HRD budget for other purposes; refusal to release employees for training, and lack of integration with HRM.

This picture departs in every particular from the ideal-type of SHRD presented in the literature and discussed at length in Chapter 2. Regarding “planned for” HRD, for example, Ulrich (1998) argues that HRD should be judged by ‘what it delivers’ (p.29) relative to organisational goals, while Garavan (1991) asserted the importance of integrating HRD plans and policies with those of the organisation as a whole. There was little evidence of this occurring in the Saudi public organisations. The funding issues reported, which contrast strongly with the liberal US spending reported in the literature (ASTD, 2009a) can be seen as contradicting the human capital approach asserted by a number of respondents, in other words, a failure to see HRD as an investment that would benefit the organisation in the longer term. Refusal to release employees for training suggests a lack of line management support, regarded as vital by McCracken
and Wallace (2000), while the absence of complementarity with HRM indicates lack of awareness that HRD is a vital component of HRM (Harrison, 1997) and so should arise from and be integrated with HRM strategies (McCracken and Wallace, 2000). HRD practitioners were often confined to an administrative role and excluded from decision-making, contrary to the OD perspective in which the HRD professional functions as a change agent (Hanson and Lubin, 1995; O’Toole, 2010) and the strategic role envisaged by McIntyre (2004). A general complaint was that management or ministerial concerns about short-term expense and disruption took precedence over long-term goals to which HRD might contribute. Such short-termism was at the heart of many of the issues raised by respondents, for as Jarvalt and Randma-Liiv (2010) argue, if HRD is viewed as a long term investment, then top management should provide encouragement and guidance for it. Inadequate recognition of the long-term benefits (related to professional, institutional and cultural factors which will be discussed later) resulted in weaknesses in tangible support and cooperation, despite the rhetoric. A few practitioners had succeeded in asserting and demonstrating the value of HRD and won support as a result, but the majority appeared to be more reactive, confining themselves to criticism of the status quo and hope that the situation might change in future.

Thus, overall, the findings in relation to these three research questions present a complex picture of the concept, practice and strategy of HRD in the Saudi public sector, characterized by competing discourses, and a contrast between rhetoric and reality. HRD in Saudi Arabia is a relatively new discipline, emerging within the context of a society in transition. This poses a number of challenges for HRD in these organisations, which will be considered next.
9.3 Research Question Four: How do HRD practitioners view the main problems and challenges facing HRD now and for the future in Saudi public organisations?

Although the findings summarized above relate specifically to the first three research questions, concerning how practitioners conceptualize HRD, how the HRD function is currently enacted, and to what extent it can be regarded as strategic, they also go some way towards answering the fourth question.

When participants were asked what obstacles they faced, or what they considered to be the challenges currently facing HRD in Saudi Arabia, they tended to repeat and re-emphasize points they had made previously in response to other questions, and which have already been raised in chapters Six, Seven, and Eight. For that reason, they will not be discussed at length here, but merely summarized. The problems mentioned fell into three main categories: problems at organisational level, problems related to training providers, and problems at Ministry level.

At organisational level, participants drew attention to issues such as shortage of HR staff, inability to compete with the private sector in terms of salaries and perquisites, lack of career path, employees’ lack of interest in training, low English proficiency which prevented some employees from fully benefiting from training, and employee turnover, which meant the benefits of employee training could be lost to the organisation. Such factors both contributed to and resulted from a perceived lack of management support in some organisations.

In relation to training providers, participants complained of shortage and inconvenient location of training centres, the inability of the IPA to meet demand, lack of expert
trainers, the overly generalized and theoretical focus of courses, which did not meet context-specific needs, and inadequacy of financial support for training provision.

Inadequate financial support was said to be a problem at Ministry level also. Other obstacles ascribed to this level included lack of co-ordination among government agencies in relation to training and development issues, and, above all, restrictive regulations and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that interfered with HRD practices as participants thought they should be performed.

Participants’ comments raised a large number of separate issues which they perceived as obstacles to their performance of their role and challenges to the HRD function generally. However, a closer analysis, informed by insights from the literature, documentary evidence and the researcher’s own extensive experience in HRD in Saudi Arabia, suggests that the matters raised are symptomatic of deeper and more complex issues which pose three key challenges to HRD for the foreseeable future: professionalizing the HRD function, HRD culture, and government strategy.

These three areas are related - albeit not in a one-to-one correspondence - with the three “levels” of challenge referred to above. Problems at organisational level tend to be related to the professional standing of HRD and the conflict between global HRD assumptions and practices, on the one hand, and traditional local workplace assumptions and values on the other. Problems with training providers and at Ministry level are more related to government strategy-setting. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

9.3.1 Professional standing of HRD

A significant theme throughout the research, and particularly in the interviews, has been the emergent and uncertain professional standing of HRD and its practitioners, several
manifestations and implications of which have been discussed. Reference has been made, for example, to the low level or doubtful relevance of the qualifications of HRD staff. Indeed, it was noted that among the survey respondents, only four had specialized in HRD and most occupants of HRD positions had not graduated in a related specialism. This was closely linked with the absence of relevant programmes in Saudi universities. However, even when appropriately knowledgeable and skilled personnel could be found, it was not easy to recruit and retain them.

One of the difficulties reported was inability to compete - in terms of salary and perquisites - with the private sector. This is an interesting point, as it contradicts the more generally reported view (for example, Achoui, 2009) that Saudis prefer public sector work, and that one reason for this is the higher salaries paid by the public sector.

The answer to this apparent contradiction may lie in differentials related to nationality, job type and skill level. Whilst it may at one time have been true that public sector work was more highly paid and attractive to Saudis, the rise of bigger private companies (such as petrochemicals and telecommunications companies) able to pay more to attract qualified staff, may be changing the situation. Moreover, given the shortage of Saudis with specific skills and the widely attested preference of the private sector for expatriates, it may be that it is non-Saudis who are lured to the private sector. Whatever the reasons, HRD managers saw their departments as not only understaffed but also suffering a shortage of personnel with adequate skills and experience in the HRD field.

Other manifestations of weak professional standing were the reported perceptions in the organisations that HRD is merely an administrative function that “anyone can do”, and marginalization of HRD managers in issues of budget-setting and strategic decision-making.
Another issue in the professionalization of HRD is the high level of centralization, which constrains managers in the performance of their work. As one participant suggested:

*They [government agencies] should give freedom to the public organisations to work according to their plan and empower the HRD managers. They can set the framework of our activities but should not be involved in the procedure of our work (P21).*

Thus, although the HRD managers interviewed had a strong sense of the importance of their role and clearly aspired to professional status, they were not necessarily treated as professionals by their own organisations, or the government agencies overseeing the public organisations - and indeed, few had benefited from a directly relevant professional preparation, which both reflected and perpetuated their ambiguous status.

A suggestion made by one interviewee was that the employment system (meaning the Civil Service policies and regulations, by which public sector organisations are bound) should recognize the importance of HRD by upgrading those who work for HRD/T&D/OD departments and increasing their salary and status. In the meantime, however, the challenge facing practitioners is to assert their own professionalism, or increase their own influence in the face of competing traditions and complex structures.

The importance of proactivity on the part of HRD professionals themselves was asserted by an interviewee (P21) who insisted that HRD will not win the needed support throughout the organisation unless practitioners “do more innovative work in order to make people value us”. In his view, HRD departments should move away from their current role as administrative departments, to become change agents in every organisation.
In this respect, it is interesting to consider work on the diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995). Rogers notes that among the factors conducive to take-up of an innovation is perceived relative advantage, that is, the perception that the new practice has advantages over the old. Another is observability, that is, the extent to which the effects of a new policy or practice are visible and capable of being evaluated. A problem faced by HRD in this respect is that effects may only emerge in the long term, or indeed may be intangible.

In this situation it is important that HRD practitioners within organisations play a strong advocacy role in order to persuade top management of the benefits of investing in HRD. As evidenced in Chapter Eight, some of the interviewees had in fact managed to do this, and in consequence had attained some success in budget negotiations and in enlisting support for training initiatives. Others, however, had either not tried to do so, or had lacked the ability to demonstrate effectively the value of the HRD function and so had become increasingly frustrated with the status quo. There is clearly an interaction effect in operation here - a “Catch-22” whereby some HRD practitioners are marginalized in their organisations because of a lack of professional standing, yet they have difficulty presenting themselves as professionals because of their limited opportunity to act within the organisation. Part of the challenge of professionalization of the HRD function in the coming years will be the need for greater proactivity on the part of practitioners, in asserting and demonstrating what they can contribute to organisation strategy.

In order to play such a role, however, training and development is needed for the HRD practitioners themselves, to enable them to gain and consolidate their professional skills. Only then will they be able to challenge their status effectively and persuade public organisations of the strategic importance of HRD practice.
9.3.2 Conflicting Cultures

Although it is important for HRD practitioners in Saudi Arabia to develop a sense and recognition of their professionalism, this alone is not enough. Assuming that HRD continues to develop as a profession in Saudi Arabia, the questions arise, what would be the role and function of this profession? What values will it espouse? These questions highlight the second main challenge facing HRD in Saudi Arabia - that of resolving the current tensions and dilemmas between reform (in the direction of “modernization” or “global values”) and tradition, in order to develop a culturally - appropriate model of HRD thinking and practice.

A major theme emerging from the interviews was the tension or dilemma of conflicting values. Saudi culture is collectivist, prioritizing family commitments and social relations. In contrast, Western organisational theory is more individualistic and focuses more on performance and economic measurements (Branine and Pollard, 2010). Local cultural traditions and practices and assumptions about organisational life are interacting with alternative, competing ideas about organisational life - ones that involve different assumptions about priorities, values, relationships and so on.

Referring again to innovation diffusion theory (Rogers, 1995) another of the factors influencing whether and how readily an innovation will be adopted is its compatibility with salient values. In relation to HRD, there are areas of conflict between the assumptions and practices of global business, and certain values prevailing within Saudi culture.

As Tayeb (2005) notes, in the Gulf States, societal culture supports a centralised State, with strong organisational cultures rooted in regional tradition, religious values and
community. This phenomenon has, indeed, been observed in this study, where several of the issues raised by interviewees concerned practices reflecting prevailing social norms, for example wastah and the exploitation of social networks. One manifestation of these cultural issues is the failure to apply clear and systematic criteria for HRD and career paths; what is required of one employee may be waived for another employee, due to the influence of social relations.

Al-Yafi (2003) referred to a conflict between so-called “family values” and “business values”, for example in recruitment and selection, where business values imply selection based on required competencies, whereas family values focus more on the employment of particular individuals for social reasons, irrespective of competencies. Although Al-Yafi was referring specifically to small and medium-sized family-owned businesses, the same problems are found in the public sector, according to the participants in this study. A number of ways were cited in which HRD practices reflect family and community values more than business values, not only in recruitment and selection but also in, for example, the use of training as a recreational trip to reward a favoured employee, rather than to meet a developmental need. Similar issues have been raised by a number of writers (e.g. Millahi and Wood, 2001; Tayeb, 2005) in discussion of HRD and management issues in the Saudi context and, indeed, in the Arab world generally.

Competing with the collectivist ethos of traditional Saudi society is the global business culture with its dynamics of individualism and prioritization of organisation strategy. In such a culture, reward should be conferred for merit, not for social reasons, and employee development should serve organisational purposes.
The tension between Saudi Arabia’s “modernization” aspiration and traditional culture, and the dilemma this poses for HRD practice, was clearly articulated by one participant (P7). He considered that the government’s aim of putting Saudi Arabia among the top 10 competitive nations required ‘thinking globally and adopting modern managerial practice’ but also suggested a need for what he called “customization”, and insisted that Western HRD concepts and programmes cannot be imported without consideration of the Arab culture and religion. As he expressed it:

‘I am not saying we should not learn from others; no, we must learn from others, especially the West where HRD was born, but at the same time, we should not cut and paste from overseas contexts’ (P7).

As the findings of this study, and the above comments have shown, HRD in Saudi Arabia can be seen as in a state of transition - still upholding deeply-rooted cultural traditions, yet also aspiring to “modernization” and global values. At present, HRD practitioners and public sector organisations are still struggling to find the right balance.

9.3.3 Government strategy for HRD

In Saudi Arabia, as in other Gulf countries, human capital development is to a great extent the concern of the government (Achoui, 2009), due to the characteristically centralized and bureaucratic nature of the policy infrastructure. This is in contrast to, for example, Singapore, where Osman-Gani (2004) has reported a tripartite approach in which employees, unions and government (including a variety of departments and agencies) all cooperate. Such centralization means that the public organisations, and their HRD functions, experience strong impacts from government strategy, in their budget allocations, regulations and even day-to-day procedures.
In many respects, the Saudi government has been very supportive of HRD in both rhetoric and practice. The Ministry of Economy and Planning (2002) has prepared a long-term ‘vision’ for economic and human resources development up to 2020. The ‘vision’ document emphasised the importance of human capital development as both an input to and consequence of economic progress. Successive national development plans, moreover, have placed increasing emphasis on the training of the Saudi population, as part of the government’s localization strategy (see Chapter 3).

On the one hand, government interest has beneficial effects on HRD; it creates a social pressure for HRD activities, and it has led to the provision of funding and scholarships, as a result of which many employees have been able to undertake training inside and outside the kingdom.

On the other hand, the comments of interviewees in this study suggest that in practice, implementation of the strategy leaves much to be desired. For example, one respondent (P16) noted that although the government’s Eighth Development Plan focuses on manpower development, its policies are not being applied. An example of a failure to apply existing provisions concerns the rule that public sector employees who receive scholarships for further education and training should, on return, work for their sponsoring organisation for a period equal to the duration of their study before seeking employment elsewhere. In practice, this rule is ignored (P16), which not only makes it difficult to predict what skills and knowledge will be available to or needed by the organisation, but also may deter organisations from nominating and releasing employees for training, since they may not reap the benefit of it.

Another participant (P9) particularly commented on the lack of coordination among the various government entities with interests and responsibilities related to HRD, for
example the Ministries of Civil Service, Higher Education and Finance, as well as the training centres.

It was also suggested by participants (for example, P9) that cumbersome bureaucratic procedures make it difficult to keep pace with rapidly changing needs; regulations were said to be old and out-of-date, not in keeping with the requirements of a dynamic environment. Indeed, it was even claimed by some participants that, despite the extensive regulations and supportive rhetoric, there is no real clear policy, a view that seems to be borne out by the frustrations practitioners reported in their dealings with government agencies.

Lack of clarity in government strategy, and particularly as regards the specifics of implementation, poses a significant challenge to HRD organisers and practitioners at micro-level. In a centralized, bureaucratic system, as we have seen, organisations are tied by state regulations, for example in the use of the IPA. Yet, in the absence of a clear strategy, IPA courses do not necessarily meet substantive need, capacity is inadequate and availability limited regionally. Nor is there a clear, specific policy on how many people are to be trained abroad and in what fields. Consequently, some requests for training budget considered necessary by the organisation may be refused, or bargained downward as a matter of course, yet organisations are also sending people on courses almost randomly, to hit statistical targets, without any clear perception of what is needed or how the training will contribute to the organisation, or to the national HRD strategy.

One problem with the government strategy is perhaps that it focuses too exclusively on localization and neglects to take a coherent view of interrelations among economic development, education and training. One of the critics of localization on a one-to-one
basis, such as is being attempted by the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia, is Wadeea (2000), who argues the need for a strategy and policy that takes account of the labour market structure and human capital development. However, the comments of participants in this research support the view of Wadeea and others, who assert that such a strategy is currently lacking.

In the absence of a coherent, nation-wide HRD strategy tailored to the needs of the labour market, Saudi Arabia continues to suffer from an imbalance between the output of its education system and the actual needs of employees. This was seen earlier, in relation to the difficulty faced by HRD departments in finding skilled and qualified professionals of national origin, and illustrates how the national strategy problem interacts with the professionalization issue.

Lack of a clear strategy also has impacts on HRD practitioners’ function at organisation level. In this regard, the policy guidelines associated with the ‘Vision’ for development include raising standards of technical and scientific education in various educational institutions, and enhancing managerial abilities and skills and innovative competences of existing companies through industrial learning. However, there is nothing specific about HRD within organisations - even those of the public sector - and how this may fit into and support the national strategy (or, indeed, how the national strategy and policy infrastructure may support human capital development within the organisations). This can be seen as a significant shortcoming, given that the public sector organisations are bound by civil service regulations, as well as dependent on budgetary allocations from the Treasury, both of which affect their ability either to provide their own HRD activities or to avail themselves of national provision such as IPA courses and overseas scholarships.
As one participant indicated, a lack of clear plans, strategies and goals at the level of the Committee for Training and Scholarship of Civil Service Employees resulted in the provision of general programmes rather than the specific programmes needed, and of ‘HRD for the sake of HRD’ rather than ‘HRD for results’ (P20).

Interestingly, the same issue of vagueness and lack of coherence in government strategy has recently been raised in the Saudi government, in a debate in the Majlis Al-Shura-the consultative assembly or parliament which discusses and advises on legislation. The debate concerned the Ninth Development Plan, which will guide government policy and action for the five-year period 2010-2014. Strong emphasis is placed in the plan on human resource development, but the plan was strongly criticised in the Majlis for its lack of clarity and specificity as to implementation. After intense debate, the government’s development strategy was passed by a single vote. This development supports the contention of this thesis that human resource development strategy at national level is a key issue and challenge for the near future. Moreover, it suggests an increasing openness and willingness to criticize ministerial policy, reflecting a growing trend, albeit slow and gradual, toward public sector reform. Thus, the possibility is open for future dialogue on the linkage between organisational and national HRD strategies, to which an emerging and more proactive HRD profession could usefully contribute.

9.4. Implications of the Research

This thesis reports an in-depth exploration of the concept, practice and strategy of HRD in Saudi public organisations. The findings that emerge have implications both for HRD theory and for development of practice in the Saudi context. Moreover, the methodology adopted, and the experience of applying it in the field, yield implications
that may be significant for future researchers in a similar context. These three-fold implications - for theory, for practice and for research method- will be highlighted in the following section.

9.4.1. Implications for theory

As noted in Chapter One, HRD originated in the US and reflects a Western perspective, but has been comparatively ignored in the Middle East, especially in the Arab Middle East (Wire, 2003). For example, McLean and McLean (2001) defined HRD from a variety of national perspectives but there is a notable absence of the Arab perspective. A number of writers have acknowledged that HRM in the Arab world is under-researched (Hutchings and Weir, 2006) and Common (2008) draws attention to the large gap in the literature in relation to the Gulf region. This study contributes to filling this gap, with particular reference to the Saudi public organisations. Hitherto, there has been a lack of empirical evidence to support the conceptualization of HRD in such a context. Taking the global literature as a foundation, this study has explored empirically the structural framework, activities and role of HRD in the Saudi public sector and in this way contributes to better understanding of the conceptualization of HRD in a developing country.

This in turn contributes towards supplying a theoretical deficiency noted in the literature, that is, the lack of a definition of HRD suitable to the Arab and specifically Saudi context. It has been noted that definitions of HRD will differ between countries in relation to differences between them in economic, political, legislative and social factors (McLean and McLean, 2001), and this study has shed light on the implication of such factors for the way in which HRD can currently be defined in the Saudi context. It has
been shown that HRD is predominantly seen in terms of T&D. The organisational development and career development roles identified in the Western literature appear to be less important in the context of Saudi Arabia’s highly centralized system of government, where such matters are strangely dependent on government plans and policies. In a context where organisations’ existence, abolition, purposes, targets and modus operandi are the subject of government decrees, and where individual career paths are constrained by civil service regulations, the role of HRD in these areas appears currently to be limited. At the same time, it is clear from the study findings that any definition of HRD in Saudi Arabia must be extended beyond the individual and organisational benefits that predominate in Western definitions, to include the benefits to the government and society as a whole - for example, in the Saudi case, organisations’ HRD is expected to contribute towards Saudization and national social-economic development plans. Thus, it can be suggested that in the Saudi public sector context, HRD can be defined as “activities provided to employees to enhance knowledge and skills in order to improve performance and productivity, and thereby, to contribute to social and political goals”.

The research contributes to undersatanding of HRD in several further ways. A key strength of this thesis lies in the ecological validity conferred by the exploration of HRD from the perspectives of practitioners. As such, it provides rich and detailed insights into the nature and role of HRD in the Saudi public sector and the challenges it currently faces. In this way it contributes to and supports a view of HRD as a fluid, complex and evolving process. It traces structural and functional elements which have impacts on HRD in the Saudi public sector, especially policies that directly or indirectly shape training and development decisions, procedures and practices. The understanding
so gained, of the interaction between HRD activities and the complex Saudi environment may form the basis for further theory-building in the area of HRD in a cross cultural context.

In particular, the findings challenge the deficiency (or skills gap) perspective of HRD in the Saudi public context, and provide support for the network/actor perspective (Garavan et al., 1998). Whereas the T&D-oriented perspective of HRD that emerges, and the repeated emphasis on improving employees' performance, appear consistent with the deficiency model, the lack of proper TNA and the interference of personal and political considerations in training decisions contradict such a view. What emerges in this study is clear evidence that in the Saudi public sector, HRD is an outcome of interactions among many stakeholders: employees, managers, training organisations, government committees and ministry officials-who have differing expectations, roles and values in relation to HRD. Thus, HRD is enacted and developed through an ongoing process of negotiation and accommodation between these at times competing perspectives.

Another contribution is specifically in relation to “strategic” HRD. The research has explored a variety of rationales proposed by scholars in strategic HRD, in the Saudi public sector context. In this way it has provided empirical data to contribute to the ongoing development of ideas around the strategic integration of HRD. The strategic HRD literature in general focuses on the contribution of HRD to shaping and enacting organisation - level strategies. The present study contributes to and enriches the debate in this area by indicating possible limitations to the applicability of commonly-voiced assumptions and prescriptions (e.g. McCracken and Wallace, 2000) in the Saudi public sector. Furthermore, it recognizes that in such a context, “strategy” (however nebulous
and unclear it may currently be in practice) has to be understood at government level also. By drawing attention to these factors, the research may provide input into a wider debate on strategic HRD, which links HRD activities with national as well as organisational strategies.

A particularly interesting and important contribution of the research is its contribution to understanding HRD in different administrative settings, and particularly whether or how HRD principles can be implemented in a context where cultural values play a key role in determining how HRD is conceptualized and carried out. It demonstrates clearly the need to take account of differences in work-related beliefs and national culture between countries. The research supports with empirical evidence assertions by previous writers (for example, Branine and Pollerd, 2010) that although Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia are interested in Western business practices, Western organisational theory does not transfer easily to such a context. The research has highlighted the effects of internal and external (e.g. political, economic and social) environmental factors on the day-to-day practices of HRD in the Saudi public sector and shown that such practices cannot be adequately understood without understanding these forces, which contribute to create a HRD culture that differs in some significant ways from the Western model. Work related beliefs are strongly influenced by cultural and social values, such as a collective orientation and the primacy of family and community obligations, which means that blind imitation of Western approaches may not be possible, or even appropriate. Whilst the availability of financial resources may appear to support the introduction of HRD practices, for example, this facilitating factor is countered by the constraints of a slow-moving bureaucratic system and by assumptions and expectations within the local culture.
As yet, there is no obvious solution for this dilemma, but the evidence suggests a need to develop a more culturally-appropriate model of HRD for the Middle Eastern context. Saudi Arabia is a case where Western-developed theories need to be re-shaped to suit the difference in working and social environment. For example, there is a need to incorporate relational approaches, complementary to the Western-type objective, strategic approach, in order to enhance acceptance and effectiveness of HRD practices in the Saudi context. The following sub-section contains some thoughts on how this might be done – or at least begun, in the practical domain, but ongoing debate and future research is needed to develop organisational theory in this respect.

9.4.2. Implications for practice

The findings of this study have some implications for HRD professionals and policy makers in Saudi Arabia. The enhancement of HRD has been a major priority of the Saudi government, reflected in its being identified as a crucial element in successive national development plans. The development of human resources is accorded particular importance in the realization of the government’s Saudization policy. This policy places emphasis on training Saudi nationals to acquire the necessary skills to become the bulk of the work force rather than allowing strategic positions to be occupied by expatriate workers. For this dream to come true, there is a need to understand the major problems and challenges facing HRD in Saudi public organisations, in order to find ways to address the problems. The rich information provided in this study suggests a number of areas on which practitioners and policy makers might usefully focus in an attempt to address the identified challenges to HRD.
First, it was identified that HRD in the kingdom currently suffers from an ambiguous professional status. Despite the rhetorical support for HRD and the lip-service paid to its strategic role, HRD practitioners are still under-qualified, excluded from decision-making, and relegated to an administrative role. In the longer term, there is a need for appropriate specialisms to be offered in Saudi universities, to enable the preparation of a local cadre with the requisite skills, knowledge and professional values. Such courses might also contribute in bridging the apparent gap between “global” organisational values and local values (this point is taken up further, below, in relation to cultural challenges to HRD). In the meantime, participants showed a willingness to pursue their own personal and professional development, as noted earlier in relation to their conceptualization of HRD. Continuation of such efforts is important, to enhance the professional status of HRD and its practitioners. However, this alone will not be sufficient to assure practitioners of a respected, strategic role in their organisations. As one participant acknowledged, HRD practitioners will need to exercise some creativity and ingenuity to establish and develop their role in the organisations. Rare examples of such a proactive stance were observed in this study, for example, the HRD manager who had demonstrated the benefits of HRD by inviting top management to attend a programme strategically selected to be of particular interest to them. The support so gained had subsequently been extended to other HRD activities. This seems to have been a successful stratagem which other practitioners might consider emulating. Currently, many present themselves as frustrated victims of circumstance, yet some, at least, clearly aspire to be change agents in their organisations. Change in the role and professional standing of HRD practitioners may be brought about partly by external forces such as the government and the universities, but it seems that practitioners can do
much to help themselves by continuing to explain their role and demonstrate practically what they can bring to the organisation. The creation of some sort of forum for exchange of ideas might facilitate this endeavour.

It was also suggested in this thesis that, given the current emergent state of HRD and transition of Saudi society, HRD practitioners are struggling to find an appropriate balance between “modernization”, represented by international business values, and “tradition”, manifested in phenomena such as nepotism and “Sheikhocracy”. Expectations associated with social obligations were seen to result in some practices that appear to contradict the principles and purposes of HRD, suggesting the fluid context of HRD practices.

This is not to say that local values should be dismissed altogether. Indeed, there are some aspects of Saudi cultural values in relation to work life which may be regarded as beneficial, for example the emphasis on loyalty, the value placed on enjoyment and harmonious, supportive social relations in the workplace and, particularly, work-life balance. The latter contrasts with the West, where many people work increasingly long hours, often at the expense of family and social life; they are expected to put the organisation first. In Saudi culture it is accepted that employees have other commitments, to family and community. One interviewee, for example, commented on Saudi men’s responsibilities for outside activities such as shopping, accompanying family members to hospital, or attending the mosque. Whilst taking time off for such activities could, if taken to extremes or done in a haphazard, ad hoc manner, cause problems for the organisation, it could be argued that some degree of accommodation between organisation and employees on such matters may be conducive to maintaining employee morale. Indeed, concessions of this kind may be a “reward” that is valued by
employees, and could to some extent compensate for the lack of flexibility in offering more conventional rewards.

It could also be suggested, however, that some traditional practices are not only unhelpful to HRD, but actually contrary to Islam. For example, partiality and bias contravene the Islamic concept of truthfulness (Sedq) whereby Muslims are reminded not to allow personal feelings to divert them from justice, care and trustworthiness. Wastah is contrary to the principle of justice (adl), which demands equality and fair treatment, e.g. in rewarding or giving opportunity to employees.

It could be argued that, notwithstanding the tensions and dilemmas highlighted, there are in fact Islamic values that would be supportive of “modern” HRD practices. For example, conduct should be governed by “trustworthiness, responsibility, sincerity, discipline, diligence, co-operation, gratitude and moderation” (Branine and Pollard, 2010, p.718). Islamic thought dignifies work and values workers as the means of value and wealth creation, and hence the prosperity of society (Ali, 2010), a view which seems consistent with the idea of human capital. The principle of steadfastness in seeking truth and justice gives importance to constructive criticism and advice – for example in performance appraisal. Justice demands equitable treatment of employees and effective implementation of regulations. The value attached to conscientious self-improvement and the duty of care placed on managers for their subordinates could promote learning, training and creativity. It may be helpful for HRD practitioners, in advocating their role and explaining their practice, to consider how they can invoke such values.

Whilst the aforementioned implications concerned organisations and their HRD practitioners, the findings of this study also have implications at government level.
Saudi people have traditionally relied on the government for their well-being, and it plays a unique role as provider. This includes direct and indirect involvement of government in promoting HRD at both national and organisational levels. Consequently, government regulations have a strong impact on the organisational environment, and on organisations’ decision and policy-making. It has been seen that difficulties experienced with training, budgets and permits for study leave, for example, were widely perceived as attributable to the prevailing high level of centralization and stranglehold of bureaucratic regulations, exacerbated by lack of clarity in strategy, which meant regulations were not applied consistently. The various impacts of this situation on organisations and particularly HRD practitioners have already been discussed (see, for example, Chapter Eight and, in this chapter, section 9.3). Whilst decentralization is proceeding – albeit very slowly – in some areas, with the government’s privatization programme, in the meantime public organisations remain subject to national policies and rules. In this context, a clear strategy as to what personnel and skills are needed in the public sector and how these targets are to be achieved, as well as clear policies on training provision, would help organisations, and particularly their HRD staff, to identify needs, to make a convincing case for their requirements (both to top management and to the relevant government agencies) and to obtain the necessary funding and support.

9.4.3 Implications for Research Methods

Methodologically, this research has demonstrated the value and feasibility of using a qualitative approach in the Saudi context. The interviews gave the participants the opportunity to express their views on HRD. This is important taking into consideration that most research conducted in Saudi Arabia, particularly in management, has adopted
a quantitative approach, or if a qualitative element has been included, it has been relegated to a subsidiary role. Recently, new opportunities for qualitative research have been opened up by a new mood of openness and interest of professionals in various spheres in having their voices heard.

In order that future researchers may take advantage of this opportunity, it is worth reflecting briefly on some aspects of the researcher’s experiences in conducting this study. An unplanned and unexpected factor that proved helpful to the conduct of the research was an interview with the researcher, by a journalist from a local newspaper. The newspaper had approached the researcher, via his organisation, the IPA, for comments on HRD in the health sector, to tie in with a health event being held in the city. The interview was reported in a full-page article. Some of the practitioners approached for interview had read the feature in question and therefore were already to some extent acquainted with the researcher’s work and credentials. This undoubtedly helped in gaining access and encouraging participants to share their views. Two implications can be derived from this experience: first, the value of providing potential respondents with as much information as possible about the research and the researcher, prior to arranging interviews; second, the importance of being open to unexpected opportunities that may arise in the field. While the overall research design must be planned in advance, unexpected gains, especially in qualitative research, can come from chance encounters and events, to enhance the research.

A second point concerns the process of conducting the interviews, and the importance of culturally – appropriate behaviour. In Arab culture, for example, it is considered impolite, in any transaction, to proceed too quickly and directly to the business in hand. Social norms demand a lengthy period of preliminary social niceties – chatting about
current events, asking after one another’s families, and so on. Such conversation establishes a cordial atmosphere and smooths the way for the eventual transaction. As a native of Saudi Arabia, the researcher was aware of and comfortable with this tradition. To a Western researcher, who may be accustomed to a more direct approach, the appropriate style may be harder to attain, but it would be beneficial to seek advice about such cultural expectations when embarking on research in a foreign context.

A third point is that, in line with local traditions of hospitality, a number of participants invited the researcher for lunch or dinner, at their homes or at a local restaurant. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, it was not always possible to accept these invitations. The implication of this, however, goes beyond the loss of a pleasant social encounter. Such meetings and conversation, away from the formality and potential interruptions of the office, might have encouraged participants to speak more freely and at greater length, thereby enabling the researcher to obtain even greater insight into practitioners’ conceptions and experience of HRD. If future researchers are in a position to avail themselves of such opportunities, it is likely to add to the richness and authenticity of the research outcomes.

9.5. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This research has focused on HRD in Saudi public sector organisations. It has not examined HRD-related issues in the private sector. The two may not necessarily be the same and could have different ‘stories’ to tell. According to the first national report on human development (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2003) the private sector is now the main provider of jobs in the Kingdom, accounting for 85.3 per cent of the total in 2000. Given the governments’ ongoing privatization programme and the near-
saturation of the public sector, HRD in the private sector can be expected to assume increasing importance in the coming years. With the large role played in the private sector by small and medium size firms, many of which are family businesses, these companies may be even more affected than the public sector by the conflict between “family values” and “business values” described by Al-Yafi (2003). They are also heavily dependent on foreign labour (and, indeed, said to prefer it, according to Achoui, 2009) and so may be affected differently than the public sector by localization policies. For these reasons, a complete understanding of the current status and future prospects of HRD in Saudi Arabia demands investigation of the private sector, and perhaps comparison between the two sectors along selected dimensions.

Another limitation is that all the interviews conducted during this research were undertaken in one city: Riyadh. It would have been preferable to include HRD managers from other cities. The selected city Riyadh is, in some respects, different from other cities when one takes into consideration the fact that training centres are available because it is a capital city. Other regions lack such centres. Some of the participants revealed during the interviews that an obstacle to training is the reluctance of some employees to leave their families to attend training in other cities. Such considerations could have an impact on their perception of the problems and challenges facing HRD. There is, therefore, a need to hear from participants from the other regions of the Kingdom as well.

Another limitation of this study is the inability to interview the top - management of these organisations, such as ministers and Chief Executives of these organisations. Only HRD managers were interviewed. Thus, the insights gained, although valuable, are not comprehensive. For example ministers and CEOs may have perspectives on HRD that
differ from that of HRD managers in these organisations. Importantly also, this study did not include employees themselves. The perspectives of employees may be different and interesting. It would also be interesting to investigate the perspectives of line managers on the role and challenges of implementing HRD in their respective organisations.

Another area for further studies, in view of the criticisms raised by respondents in this study, is an in-depth evaluation of the quality of HRD training and trainers, in both private and public organisations. It should focus on investigating how T&D programmes are designed and managed. In the case of public organisations, it would be useful to find out the extent to which external training centres and their T&D programmes are suitable for employees in public organisations.

It would also be worthwhile to conduct an empirical study on the relationship between HRD and organisational performance, particularly in the light of the level of integration between the role of HRD and organisational strategy, and the hopes and concerns expressed in the surveyed organisations about the costs and benefits of investing in human capital.

This study faced limitations both in time and resources. The researcher spent about four months in the field collecting data. It would be useful if another researcher could spend a longer time in these organisations and adopt an ethnographic perspective rather than conduct a short fieldwork. Spending more time in these organisations could reveal much more than would emerge on a short visit, in terms of the quality and quantity of the information generated.
Finally, in view of the evidence as to the salience of cultural considerations, it would also be useful to conduct a comparative study on HRD in Saudi Arabia and other countries, both within and outside the Middle East, in order to explore similarities and differences in the facilitating factors and challenges faced, and the way HRD practitioners are dealing with them.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

This study has highlighted the complexity of the concept, practice and strategy of HRD in the under-researched context of the Middle East, specifically, Saudi public organisations. It has been seen that HRD, like the nation itself, is in a state of transition, caught between deeply-rooted traditional values and a growing thrust towards modernization. The research has given a voice to the practitioners engaged in HRD. It is hoped that in so doing, it will contribute to ongoing debate and development of practice in the Kingdom, as well as increase understanding of Western theories and practices when seen though the lens of a novel context.
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Appendix A: Questionnaire

University of Hull

Dear participant:

I am currently studying for a PhD degree in Human Resource Management at the University of Hull, United Kingdom. I am undertaking a research project entitled “Concept, Practices and Strategy of Human Resource Development in the context of the Saudi Public Sector”, supervised by Dr. Kevin Orr.

Through this research, my aim is to understand HRD activities and factors that affect this function, and to assess the strategic and the actual benefits of HRD activities/programmes in the Saudi public sector. Your response is truly important to the success of this study. I would like to assure you that your answers will be treated as “Strictly Confidential”, and will be used for academic purposes only. So please try to answer all questions included. However, if you have any doubts or concerns, please call me any time on my mobile phone number.

I shall be pleased to share the findings of this research once the study is completed. In closing, I would like to thank you very much in anticipation for your kind cooperation.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Khalid Mohammed AlBattal
Centre for Management and Organisational Learning
Email: K.M.Batical@2005.hull.ac.uk

Dr. Kevin Orr
Director of the Centre for Management and Organisational Learning at Business Hull University in UK
Email: k.orr@hull.ac.uk
**Section A : Organisation and Structure Information**

1. **Which group does your organisation belong to?** (Please tick √ one)

   - 1. Ministry
   - 2. Authority
   - 3. Bureau
   - 4. Local Government
   - 5. Commission
   - 6. University/Training/Research Agencies
   - 7. Miscellaneous Service Agencies
   - 8. Public Agency
   - 9. Directorate General
   - 10. Presidency
   - 11. Council
   - 12. Other, please indicate ……………………………

2. **Approximately how many employees are there in your organisation?** ……………………..employees.

3. **What is the department/unit/responsible for HRD/training and development in your organisation called?**

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. **What is your HRD/T&D department/unit status within the organisation?** (Please tick √ one)

   - 1. Directorate General
   - 2. Directorate
   - 3. Department
   - 4. Unit
   - 5. Others, please specify ………………………………

5. **How many staff are there in the HRD/T&D department?** ……………………………...employees.

6. **Who do you report to?** (Position)

7. **Please indicate how many employees there are in the HRD/T&D department, according to their qualification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>High School or Less</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>PhD</th>
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<td>NO</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Section B: The purpose of this section is to understand how HRD is practised in your organisation

Part (I): Training and Development Needs Analysis

10. Does your organisation conduct employees’ training and development needs analysis?

Yes ☐ If No, what are the main reasons for not conducting it?

11. How often does your organisation identify employees’ training and development needs? (Please tick √ one)

Every year or less ☐
Every two years ☐
Every three years ☐
More than three years ☐

12. To what extent do you apply the following methods in determining and analysing employees’ training & development needs? (Please tick √)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Questionnaire survey to the employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Personal interviews with employees</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Direct observation of employees’ work and behaviour</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Performance appraisal report</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Analysing employee’s job description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Head of department or line manager’s report</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Through special training committee</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Others, please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. To what extent do you apply the following issues in your organisation with regards to need assessment and analysis? (Please tick √)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We examine top management &amp; senior managers’ opinions and perceptions regarding the organisation’s future direction and outlook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We take into account employees’ opinions and perceptions of the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We examine the financial position of organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We examine change and development in the organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We examine and consider government strategies in HRD</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We examine individual employees’ need for training and development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We examine job responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

14. When is training provided for employees in your organisation? (Please tick √)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When employees are newly recruited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>When employees are upgraded to a higher position</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When employees move to another department to have a new position</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>When performance appraisal assessment shows some weakness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>When the employees request it</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When the top management specifically request it</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>When new technologies or methods are introduced</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Training in my organisation is on a regular basis (e.g. Every year)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When we reorganise all the departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>When there is a scholarship from a training centre</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 11 | Other, please specify.............................................
### Part (II): Training Methods

15. Which of the following forms of training and development does your organisation use? (Please tick ✓)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On-the-job training</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Off-the-job training but within the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Off-the-job training (outside the organisation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other, please specify.................................</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. How often is training and development (on-the-job and off-the-job training) provided at each of the following levels? (Please tick ✓).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Senior management</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Administrative employees</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Technical</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

17. If your organisation trains the employees outside the organisation but within Saudi Arabia, where is the training carried out? (Please tick ✓)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institute of Public Administration</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vocational and technical training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Private training centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other, please specify.................................</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. If you train your employees outside Saudi Arabia, which of these countries do you send them to? (Please tick ✓)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. If you train your employees outside Saudi Arabia, what do you think are the main reasons for this? (Please tick ✓)

1. Getting different experience
2. Employees’ desire for training outside Saudi Arabia
3. Lack of appropriate training in Saudi Arabia
4. Reward for employees
5. Belief in the quality of training outside Saudi Arabia
6. Part of contract when purchasing materials
7. Other, please specify

Part III: Training and Development Evaluation

20. Does your organisation evaluate its training and development programmes?

[ ] Yes go to Q21

[ ] No. If your organisation does not carry out an evaluation, what do you think are the main reasons? (Please tick ✓)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties in measuring T&amp;D programmes</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measuring process takes a long time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of training and development programmes are not always clear</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cost of evaluating training methods</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
21. If your organisation evaluates its training and development programmes, what sort of methods do you use? (Please tick √).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testing the employees before and after the training programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask employees to fill a questionnaire at the end of the programme</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview employees after each training programme</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask the employee’s manager or supervisor for their assessment of employee’s learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare the performance of employees before and after each training programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part IV: Performance Appraisal

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to your organisation’s performance appraisal systems? (Please tick √).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have a yearly employee’s performance appraisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We compare employee’s current performance with performance standards to determine performance gap</td>
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<tr>
<td>We analyse employee’s acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes after HRD activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have reward strategies for high performance</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We discuss performance with employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part V: HRD Budget

23. Do you think the HRD in your organisation is getting the appropriate financial budget allocations?  

☐ Yes  ☐ No

24. How does this year’s HRD budget compare with last year’s?

Higher ☐  Same ☐  Lower ☐
Section C: Strategic Human Resource Development: The purpose of this section is to explore strategic aspect of HRD in your organisation.

**Strategy** concerns the present and future direction of the organisation from a broad perspective.

**Policy** concerns the specific routes to be followed and tasks to be undertaken in order to achieve the strategy.

**Plan** consists of the details of priority training interventions from the point of view of who, how, when and where.

25. Does your organisation have strategies, policies and plans for HRD (whether written or unwritten)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Unwritten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. How often is the plan/policy reviewed?

- Short term (one year and less) [ ]
- Medium term (1-3 years) [ ]
- Long term (over 3 years) [ ]

27. On which point of the following scale would you place your organisation with regards to current HRD activity? (Please note that the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive and may overlap). PLEASE TICK ONLY ONE (✓)

1. [ ] Training & learning are processes through which strategy is formulated.
2. [ ] Training & learning help to shape strategy.
3. [ ] Training is the means for implementing strategy and achieving goals.
4. [ ] Training is integrated with operational management
5. [ ] Training is isolated and tactical.
6. [ ] There is no systematic training in our organisation.
28. Please tick (✓) in the box that best reflects your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HRD strategies/policies/plans in my organisation are linked to the overall organisation strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The HRD/T&amp;D staff play a major role in relation to the formulation of organisation strategy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Training/HRD activity currently have a major contribution towards the achievement of organisation strategy</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior management are totally supportive towards HRD issues</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The budget for HRD has significantly increased over the last 5 years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Top management believes that training and development is essential for all employees in the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We frequently analyse the external opportunities that face our HRD</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Line managers in my organisation actively evaluate the effectiveness of training</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are actively involved in conducting formal training sessions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are actively involved in analysing staff training needs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Line managers in my organisation actively mentor and coach staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are supportive towards HRD issues</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>HRD/T&amp;D is the responsibility is of line management in my organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Training/HRD and personnel/HRM activities are integrated with each other in my organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Learning culture is seen as everyone’s responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Learning culture is seen as individual responsibility, not the organisation’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Training/HRD activity helps in improving organisation culture in my organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The main role of HRD/T&amp;D staff in my organisation is admin/management</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>HRD/T&amp;D staff participate in important meetings in the organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>National development plans have a strong impact on HRD in the Saudi public sector</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>We implement the requirement of the national development plan regarding HRD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Section D: Issues and Challenges in HRD

29. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to issues and challenges in HRD Practices? (Please tick ✓).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employees cannot apply what they learned in HRD programmes in the workplace</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is difficult to measure employees’ performance improvement in certain jobs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Friendship &amp; family relationships play a role in sending employees to training development programmes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Employees look at training development programmes as a time to relax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employees leave the organisation after the training &amp; development programme or after finishing study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>There is no data base about the employees in the organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>HRD programmes provided by external sources are not tailored to the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Quality of training &amp; development programmes is poor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>There is a lack of motivation among employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rules and regulations governing the HRD activities contribute negatively in developing HR in the public sector.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of the advantages of T&amp;D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>There is a shortage of skilled manpower in HRD/T&amp;D department/unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Promotion is linked to getting training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Training centres are far a way from the work place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Family and social responsibilities prevent employees from participating in T&amp;D programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Others, please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
Section E: Your job

30. What is your job title? (Please tick √).
   1. Human Resource Management Director
   2. HRD manager
   3. Organisational development manager
   4. Training manager
   5. Others, please specify

31. How many years of work experience do you have in this organisation?........ years

32. How many years of work experience do you have in the field of training and development?

.............years.

33. Your age
   30 years or less 31-40 years 41-50 years 51 years or more

34. Please indicate your educational level (please tick √ one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 High School or less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 University Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Master</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Other, (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any further comments and suggestions which you think would be useful and relevant to HRD, please write

...................................................................................................................................................

No More Questions

Thank you very much for your participation in this research survey and completing this questionnaire. If you would like to receive an executive summary of the research findings, please give your details below:

..................................................................................................................................................
Appendix B: Official Letters

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الملكة العربية السعودية
اللجنة الوزارية للتنظيم الإداري
الإمارة العامة

وفقه الله

سعادة الأستاذ خالد بن محمد البنا
عضو هيئة التدريب بمعهد الإدارة العامة

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد،

تنبغي خطابكم المحسوب أنكم تحضرون لدرجة الدكتوراه في المملكة المتحدة ومجال
بحثكم يهدف إلى التعرف على واقع تنمية الصوارد البشرية في الأجهزة الحكومية في المملكة
العربية السعودية، وأبدت فيه رغبتكما بتدويركم بحصر شامل لجميع الأجهزة الحكومية
المستقلة في المملكة العربية السعودية، لاستخدامها لأغراض البحث لحصر مجتمع الدراسة.

يسراً أن أرفق لكم قائمة بالأجهزة الحكومية وفقًا لرغبكم، آمل أن يفي ذلك بالغرض
المشروع، مع صادق الوعي لكم بالموافقة والسلام.

وتقبلوا تحياتي وتقديري...

أمين عام اللجنة الوزارية للتنظيم الإداري

أحمد بن سالم الزهراني
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

الموضوع: تقديم مساعدة لطالب دكتوراه.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ...،

أفيده سعادتكم بأن الزميل الأستاذ / خالد بن محمد البثال ، المبتعد من معهد الإدارة العامة لدراسة الدكتوراه في مجال إدارة المواد البشرية في جامعة ( هل - بريطانيا ) ، يعمل على جمع المعلومات لرسالة الدكتوراه بعنوان "واقع نشاط تطوير الموارد البشرية في الأجهزة الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية " .

أمل من سعادتكم التكرم بتقديم المساعدة له وذلك بتعين الإستبانة المرفقة علما أن نتائج البحث سوف نستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط . شاكرًا لسعادتكم تعاونكم .

وتقبلوا خالص تحياتي وتقديري ...،

مدير إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

د . مساعد بن عبدالله الغريان
Dr Kevin Orr

Director, The Centre for Management and Organizational Learning
Business School, the University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull HU6 7RX
Telephone: 01482-463083 Email: k.orr@hull.ac.uk

01 March 2008

To Whom It May Concern

This is to confirm that Khalid AlBattal is a full-time student at Hull University. He is researching for a PhD in Human Resource Management and will be conducting fieldwork in Saudi Arabia in the public sector. His work is purely academic and the information he collects will be used only for research purposes.

Your help and co-operation are important for the successful completion of his research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Kevin Orr
Supervisor
To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that the Department of Translation in the Institute of Public Administration Performed the translation of Khalid Mohammed Battal’s instruments (both research questionnaire and interview questions) for his Ph.D. research in Human Resource Development in Saudi Public Organisations at Hull University in UK.

Dr. Musaed Abdullah AL-Furayyan
Director of Planning and Development Department
E-mail : Furayyanm@ipa.edu.sa

DATE: June 23, 2010
Dear Khalid,

I am sorry to have taken so long to get back to you. Holidays etc and other research commitments have impacted here. I was also waiting to hear back from my co-author Mary Wallace re: your enquiry. She has not replied as yet but in the meantime I have decided to forward the questionnaire to you.

I would be extremely interested in receiving a copy of your findings in due course.

Good luck with the research

Martin
Dear Dr. Swailes

I believe Dr. Orr may have spoken to you regarding my plan to collect data in Saudi Arabia in the area of HRD. In view of your expertise in this area, I would be grateful if you could review my questionnaire and interview questions. I would very much appreciate your opinion and feedback as to whether the questionnaire is clear and easy to understand; whether it is likely to be easy to answer; what you think about the layout, wording and length; and whether you have any suggestions or recommendations to improve both instruments.

I would be grateful if you could drop me an email at K.M.Battal@2005.hull.ac.uk after you have reviewed it, so we can have a discussion, as I would really like to benefit from your guidance and recommendations.

Thank you for sparing me your time on this matter.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Khalid Battal
Dear friends and colleagues, PhD students

I am doing my research in the area of HRD in the Saudi context. I have developed a draft of my research questionnaire and interview questions. I would be grateful if you could find some time to review them in terms of whether they are clear and easy to understand; whether they are likely to be easy to answer; what you think about the layout, wording and length; and whether you have any suggestions or recommendations to improve both instruments.

Your feedback and suggestions would be much appreciated. Thank you very much for your time.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Khalid Battal
PhD Student
The Centre for Management and Organisational learning
Business School
Hull University
Email: K.M.Battal@hull.ac.uk
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Schedules

Interview Questions

Introduction

Thank you very much for participation in this research. The interview should take no more than one hour and with your consent I will be taping this conversation. I can assure you that all your answers will be dealt with strict confidence and will remain anonymous. The information will be used for academic purposes only. My research focuses on HRD in Saudi Arabia and I am interested in investigating the nature and extent of HRD and its associated concepts in public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia.

Section One: Organisation and Respondent’s Background

I would like to begin by asking you about your background and career, and please could you include description of your current role?

Prompt: position, education, employees.

Section Two: Department Structure

Could you please tell me about the structure of your department and the skills of your employees?

Prompt: name, number, enough, qualification
Section Three: HRD concept

1. In your own words, how do you define HRD?
2. What is the role and purpose of the HRD function in your organisation?

Section Four: HRD practices

Part (I): Needs Analysis

Can you please describe training and development needs analysis in your organisation?

Prompt: frequency, methods, employees’ involvement, evaluation

Part (II): Delivery of HRD activities

Can you explain when and how training is provided for employees in your organisation?

Prompt: frequency, level, local, in-house/outsource, overseas, long-term, short-term

Part (III): Career plan

1. Can you describe employees’ career planning and progression?
2. What is your opinion about this method?

Prompt: if they do not have one, why?
Part IV: HRD budget

1. Is the budget adequate for achieving the HRD objectives for employees’ training and development?
   
   Prompt: total budget, funding problems

Part (V) HRD evaluation

1. Do you evaluate the outcomes of employees’ training and development?
   If No, then why? If yes, then please tell me when and how?

2. What is your own evaluation if the methods used in your organisation to evaluate your T&D programmes?

Part (VI): Performance management

1. Could you please tell me, how you assess employees’ performance?

2. Do you think HRD activities influence the organisation’s performance in any way? If yes, how. If no, why?
   
   Prompt: methods, frequency, definition

Section Five: HRD plans and Strategies

Now we will talk about your HRD/ T&D plan and policy

1. How often is the HRD/T&D plan reviewed?

2. Who are involved in formulating the HRD plans and policies and what is their role?
   
   Prompt: Top manager, Line manager

3. What is the status of the HRD function within your organisation? Why do you think this is?

4. How are you involved in developing these strategies?

5. How do you think HRD and HRM/personnel are related?

6. Can you describe how you get employees to participate in HRD activities?
Section Six: Issues and Challenges for the future in HRD

1. Could you please describe any problems that you face in training and developing your employees? Or major challenges that you face in implementing HRD?
2. In your opinion, what efforts are needed in your organisation to improve the future of HRD activities?

Section Seven: Importance of HRD

1. Finally, what do you consider to be the importance of HRD?
2. To what extent do you think the money, effort and time expended on T&D is justified?
3. Is there anything further you would like to tell me about HRD?

Closing

Thank you very much for spending your precious time with me. That concludes my questions. You have given me a great deal of information, but if there is anything you would like to add or you feel I have missed, please feel free to express yourself. I may wish to conduct follow-up interviews later to fill possible gaps. In the meantime, thank you very much for your time and valuable contribution.
Appendix D: Quantitative Analysis Results Tables

Appendix D1: Department responsible for HRD (Status of HRD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>what is your HRD/T&amp;D department/unit status within the organization</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid directorate general</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directorate</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unit</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>97.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D2: Position to whom the respondent reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Ministerial level</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy minister level</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Development Director (OD)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Director of Administration &amp; Finance</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic affairs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel director</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Director</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D3: Chi square test for status of department and department responsible for HRD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics</th>
<th>which group does your organization belong to</th>
<th>what is your HR/IT&amp;O department/unit status within the organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>11.522&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>139.565&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 19.2.
b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 23.0.

Appendix D4: Work and T&D experience
### Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many years of work experience do you have in this organization</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>18.45</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>16.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Trimmed Mean</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>95.519</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>9.773</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interquartile Range</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.328</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.851</td>
<td>.451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many years of work experience do you have in the field of training and development</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Trimmed Mean</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>61.918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>7.369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interquartile Range</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.360</td>
<td>.451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D5: Age of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>your age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 years or less</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 years or more</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D6: Education level of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid high school or less</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University bachelor's degree</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D7: Specialism in field of education (spreads over 2 pages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percent % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration systems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural economics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information &amp; General relations</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
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<td>Subject</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library administration</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Animal Production</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval teaching and training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military sciences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths &amp; science</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource administration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied mathematics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative methods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance supervision</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International business admin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; training technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced banking studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D8: Frequency of identification of employees’ T&DNA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every year or less</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every three years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D9: Frequency scores for HRD strategy practice statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues and Challenged in HRD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD strategies/policies/plans in my organisation are linked to the overall organisation strategies</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The HRD/T&amp;D staff play a major role in relation to the formulation of organisation strategy</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/HRD activity currently have a major contribution towards the achievement of organisation strategy</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management are totally supportive towards HRD issues</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The budget for HRD has significantly increased over the last 5 years</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top management believes that training and development is essential for all employees in the organisation</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We frequently analyse the external opportunities that face our HRD</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers in my organisation actively evaluate the effectiveness of training</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are actively involved in conducting formal training sessions</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are actively involved in analysing staff training needs</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers in my organisation actively mentor and coach staff</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers in my organisation are supportive towards HRD issues</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD/T&amp;D is the responsibility of line management in my organisation</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/HRD and personnel/HRM activities are integrated with each other in my organisation</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning culture is seen as everyone’s responsibility</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning culture is seen as individual responsibility, not the organisation’s</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/HRD activity helps in improving organisation culture in my organisation</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main role of HRD/T&amp;D staff in my organisation is admin/management</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD/T&amp;D staff participate in important meetings in the organisation</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National development plans have a strong impact on HRD in Saudi public sector</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We implement the requirement of the national development plan regarding HRD</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Strongly agree (SA); 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Neither agree nor disagree (NS); 2 = Disagree (DA); 1 = Strongly disagree (SD)
Appendix D10: Frequency and mean scores for challenges and issues in HRD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues and Challenges in HRD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees cannot apply what they learned in HRD programmes in the workplace</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to measure employees’ performance improvement in certain jobs</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship &amp; family relationships play a role in sending employees to training development programmes</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees look at training development programmes as a time to relax</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees leave the organisation after the training &amp; development programme or after finishing study</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no data base about the employees in the organisation</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD programmes provided by external sources are not tailored to the organisation</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of training &amp; development programmes is poor</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of motivation among employees</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and regulations governing the HRD activities contribute negatively in developing HR in the public sector</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of the advantages of T &amp; D</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a shortage of skilled manpower in HRD/T&amp;D department/unit</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion is linked to getting training</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training centers are far away from the workplace</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and social responsibilities prevent employees from participating in T&amp;D programmes</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = Strongly agree (SA); 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Neither agree nor disagree (NS); 2 = Disagree (DA); 1 = Strongly disagree (SD)