Line Managers and Workplace Learning: Learning from the Voluntary Sector

RONA S. BEATTIE
Glasgow Caledonian University

ABSTRACT *This paper explores the interface between the workplace as a site of learning and the behaviours of developmental managers, those who develop self, staff and peers. The paper provides a brief literature review, outlines the research methodology utilized, and presents and discusses findings from empirical research in the voluntary sector. It is hoped that the findings will enhance understanding of the role of voluntary sector managers in supporting workplace learning. The paper provides guidance to policy makers and voluntary organizations about how to support the development of people-development skills, which ultimately affect the effective performance of voluntary organizations. It is also intended that the lessons learned from this research will be of benefit beyond the voluntary sector.*

Introduction

Since the early 1990s there has been growing recognition of the devolution of human resource development (HRD) responsibilities to line managers (e.g. Mumford, 1993; Bevan and Hayday, 1994; Heraty and Morley, 1995; de Jong *et al.*, 1999; Ellinger, 2003). However, until very recently, there has been limited research into what managers do as facilitators of learning (Mumford, 1993; Horowitz, 1999). As a consequence of this paucity of research we have limited understanding of what behaviours managers demonstrate in developmental interactions with their employees (Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999). Yet the increased attention to development on and through the job inevitably throws greater weight on managers as developers of others (Mumford, 1993).

Further, due to a resurgence in recognition of the workplace as a site of 'natural learning' (Burgoyne and Hodson, 1983), there has been increasing awareness of the need to consider the developmental responsibilities and behaviours of line managers (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999). Indeed the UK National

Correspondence Address: Dr Rona S. Beattie, Head of People Management, Learning and Change, Caledonian Business School, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow G4 OBA, United Kingdom. Tel: +00 44 141 331 3872. Fax: +00 44 141 331 8526.
Email: r.beattie2@gcal.ac.uk

Skills Task Force (NSTF) has argued that 'the capability and commitment of managers and key workers throughout an organisation's hierarchy are the most important factors in determining the provision and effectiveness of workplace learning (both formal and informal)' (NSTF, 2000, p. 37).

Although there is an extensive literature on developmental roles that managers may play, such as mentor and coach, much of this literature is prescriptive and rhetorical, and there appear to be relatively few examples of substantive research and empirical studies focusing on managerial behaviours (Horowitz, 1999; Ellinger, 2003; Ellinger *et al.*, 2005), although MacNeil (2003) has undertaken interesting work exploring the roles of supervisors as facilitators of learning. Horowitz acknowledges that the notion of line managers having responsibility for development is valid; however, he concludes that the 'HRD literature and practice fails to address satisfactorily how this should occur' (Horowitz, 1999, pp. 187–88).

A major criticism of HRD is the lack of empirical evidence demonstrating its presence in organizations, and its influence and impact on individuals and organizations. This study has been an attempt to address the empirical deficit described above by providing an evidence base (Hamlin, 2002) for HRD's contribution to individual learning and organizational performance through analysing the actual performance of line managers as developers, rather than creating a normative list based on anecdote and consultancy imperatives.

Where empirical research exists it often focuses on the barriers that line managers face regarding facilitating workplace learning, such as: conflict between operational and developmental duties; managers' perceptions that they will gain little; lack of time; short-termism; lack of strategic direction; inadequate support from the HR function; lack of role clarity; lack of management development; and, lack of accountability and performance monitoring (Cabinet Office, 1991, 1992; Storey, 1992; Heraty and Morley, 1995; McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Hyman and Cunningham, 1998; de Jong *et al.*, 1999; Thomson *et al.*, 2001).

McGovern *et al.* (1997) found that effective devolution (of HRM) to line managers was inconsistent across a range of private- and public-sector organizations, yet their (potential) contribution is highlighted as a central element of many models of contemporary HRM (Bratton and Gold, 1994; Storey, 1995). Indeed McGovern and her colleagues' findings were contrary to the 'developmental humanism' that underpins many 'soft' models of HRM (Legge, 1995; Bell, 1999; Boyne *et al.*, 1999; Morgan and Allington, 2002), which emphasize the importance of leadership and trust between employees and managers. They conclude that 'developmental humanism' underestimates the extent to which short-term pragmatism is embedded within capitalist enterprises (McGovern *et al.*, 1997, p. 27). However, the organizations reported on here are non-profit distributing voluntary organizations whose values are not based on capital accumulation; thus the conditions may be more conducive for developmental humanism to flourish, and may therefore provide fertile territory to explore managerial behaviours that facilitate learning. Research into the voluntary sector also addresses the need to overcome empirical deficits about learning such as the nature of learning within the under-researched voluntary sector (Colley *et al.*, 2003).

This empirical study (Beattie, 2002a) focuses on the interface between the workplace as a site of learning and the behaviours of developmental managers, those

who develop self, staff and peers, by finding out what line managers actually do to *facilitate learning*. The managers studied were line managers at all levels (first to senior) and had direct responsibility for more than one member of staff.

The paper provides a brief literature review, outlines the research methodology used, and presents and discusses the findings of empirical research based on two voluntary-sector case studies.

Literature Review

Human Resource Development Strategy

Prior to focusing on the importance of the workplace as a site of learning it is useful to remind ourselves of the growing significance of HRD in today's organizations.

HRD has emerged as a concept, and practice, of growing significance in the past decade (Beardwell and Holden, 2001), and emphasizes the strategic aspects of learning rather the operational activities of training and development. While recognizing the difficulties in defining this emergent discipline, Stewart and McGoldrick provide a tentative definition:

> Human resource development encompasses activities and processes which are intended to have impact on organisational and individual learning. The term assumes that organisations can be constructively conceived of as learning entities, and that the learning processes of both organisations and individuals are capable of influence and direction through deliberate and planned interventions.
>
> (Stewart and McGoldrick, 1996. p. 1)

It is argued here that line managers as much as, if not more than, the HRD function play a critical role in facilitating such organizational and individual learning.

A range of environmental pressures has contributed to the emergence of HRD strategic activity, which can be seen in the organizations studied here (see Beattie, 2006). These include: the accelerated rate of change; focus on quality; increased need for organizational flexibility and responsiveness; increased pressure to demonstrate the contribution of human resources; competition; new technology (Garavan *et al.*, 1995). A further driver has been the increased recognition of learning as a source of competitive advantage and the realization that the value of human resources can appreciate (Wilson, 1999).

A number of themes have emerged from the literature on the role and the practice of HRD (Wilson, 1999; Horowitz, 1999) which have implications for the roles and behaviours of line managers in the workplace. First, the role of HRD is: to enable organizations to respond to challenges and opportunities through HRD interventions; to develop policies which integrate corporate and HRD strategies; to create a learning culture where learning is shared and continuous; and to add value by focusing HRD initiatives on areas which enhance competitive advantage, e.g. service excellence, leadership.

Second, key aspects of HRD practice include: ensuring that all individual employees and line managers are informed of their role and participate in HRD; the

continuous assessment of learning and development opportunities to enhance career development and organisational growth; having a systematic learning system; adopting a competency-based approach; finally, having a partnership between line managers and HRD specialists to support employee development. Examples of these are discussed in the findings below.

The Workplace as a Site of Learning

The role of workplace learning. There has been growing interest in workplace learning from both theoretical and policy perspectives (e.g. NSTF, 2000; IPD,[1] 2000; Kirby *et al*., 2003; Ardichvili, 2003; Scottish Executive, 2003), particularly as an organization's 'human capital – the knowledge, skills, competencies, relationships and creativity vested in its people – has emerged as a key competitive factor' (Reynolds *et al*., 2002). Consequently this has emphasized the importance of employees' ability to learn, and improving the capacity for workplace learning presents a real challenge for managers (IPD. 2000).

According to the Institute of Personnel and Development (2000) workplace learning includes all formal and non-formal learning that occurs, partly or wholly, in the workplace. Formal workplace learning is what most people think of as 'training' and may involve structured learning activities such as initial training for new recruits. Less formal activities, related to day-to-day work activities, include team development, action learning, knowledge sharing and knowledge management.

Of particular relevance to this paper is the concept of 'informal learning' where learning occurs 'outside formally structured, institutionally sponsored classroom-based activities, taking place under non-routine conditions or in routine conditions where reflection and critical reflection are used to clarify the situation' (Marsick and Watkins, 1997, p. 7). It has been argued that the 'commitment, enthusiasm and skills of managers' are critical to the uptake of informal learning (NSTF, 2000, p. 42).

While recognized as the most frequent form of workplace learning (Eraut *et al*., 1998; IPD, 2000) the value of informal learning has been significantly under-estimated (IPD, 2000; Reynolds *et al*., 2002) despite combining:

> learning and practice in one activity – learning by doing, for many the most effective form of learning. It is the least formal mode of learning, but at its best, it is the form of learning that most closely aligns with corporate success and is likely to become more important.
>
> (IPD, 2000, p. 2)

Finally, Marsick and Volpe (1999) suggest that organizations are beginning to foster informal learning in recognition of it being the most pervasive form of learning in organizations. They, however, acknowledge that 'we know little of how it can be best supported, encouraged and developed' (ibid., p. 3). It is hoped that this paper can contribute to enhancing the efficacy of informal learning to benefit individuals, organizations and the people they support through developing greater understanding of the part line managers can play.

Concerns about workplace learning and informal learning. Workplace and informal learning are not without criticism. First, Garrick (1998) challenges the view that informal learning can be 'utilised' to promote 'learning organisations' arguing that 'so-called democratic and participative workplaces are being "framed" by an economistic human capital theory and a "mercantilisation" of knowledge'. He continues that 'respect for the dignity of others, equity, and an appreciation of situated ethics have a place in "workplace learning", especially in the postmodern context' (Garrick, 1998, preface). Such a philosophical perspective is likely to have a sympathetic audience in the voluntary sector which is studied here.

Second, Woodall (2000) expresses several concerns regarding workplace learning. First, she found that, while both senior HR and management development specialists thought the workplace was the most important place for learning, there was limited awareness of the full range of work-based learning interventions and potential development challenges that could be used. She found little evidence of systematic promotion of workplace learning; it was expected to 'happen' as a consequence of individual managers working on personal development plans.

Second, Woodall suggests that within HRM systems there is a need to review other aspects of HRM policy and practice, including performance management systems, to ensure that they complement, rather than impede, work-based development, and to ensure that line managers play a key role in development. She contends that:

> Performance management systems are needed that create the space for separate development reviews with sufficient time for reflection, and which have as a key performance indicator evidence of line manager facilitation of the development of their direct reports.
>
> (Woodall, 2000, p. 29)

Finally, Rainbird warns that workplace learning should not be regarded as a panacea. While acknowledging that the workplace is significant as a site of learning she also cautions that 'it is also highly problematic: [as] its primary purpose is not learning, but the production of goods and services' (2000, p. 1). However, in the case of the organizations studied here learning is part of their *raison d'être* as they are trying to develop the capacity of individuals to live increasingly independent lives.

Line managers and workplace learning. Line managers are recognized as having a key role to play in facilitating workplace learning (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; IPD, 2000; Scottish Executive, 2003; Hamlin *et al.*, 2004). Marsick and Watkins suggest that managers, supported by the organization's learning system, can facilitate informal learning for individuals through planning for learning, creating mechanisms for learning in teams and developing an environment conducive for learning. They further suggest that managers can 'plan more consciously to turn challenges into learning opportunities, seek alternative viewpoints and perspectives to compensate for blind spots and limitations, and draw out lessons more explicitly' (Marsick and Watkins. 1997, pp. 308–09). However, they and Kirby *et al.* (2003, p. 49) acknowledge that managers need to be skilled to facilitate such learning, with

the latter arguing that 'just as the modern workplace requires greater learning, modern management requires greater understanding of that learning'.

The effectiveness of managers supporting workplace learning depends significantly on whether they have the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and have themselves received appropriate development (Storey, 1992; IPD, 1995; Hyman and Cunningham, 1998; Thomson *et al.*, 2001). Such effectiveness also depends on whether the organizational climate is supportive of such managerial activity (Reynold *et al.*, 2002).

The view that managers need to develop themselves, if they and others are to benefit from workplace learning, is developed further by Beckett.

> Leadership in [workplace] learning will be more apparent in those who understand their own 'context' or situation in daily social life at work – shared feelings, thoughts and actions at work construct us as workers. Those who can recognise this – who are open to their own organic learning possibilities – can then advance such learning in others.
>
> (Beckett, 1999, p. 96)

He continues that, to enhance workplace learning, there is a need for 'more explicit and structural attention to adult learning, particularly learning arising from affective experiences (feelings, emotions), and on the particular context, or "situation", of those experiences' (ibid., p. 97).

An IPD study (1995) raised concerns about the competence of line managers undertaking HRM roles. It found that both line managers and personnel specialists felt that there was a lack of support and training for line managers, particularly relating to employee motivation, a critical skill and knowledge area for effective staff development. Meanwhile Storey has argued that an impediment to line managers behaving as developers of others is their own lack of development, as 'managers who have themselves received little education and training are less likely to recognise or approve the need for investment in the training of their subordinates' (1992, p. 213). In their study of empowerment Hyman and Cunningham (1998) found that some managers found it difficult to adopt a more facilitative style of management that would support development.

Thomson *et al.* (2001) found a correlation between line manager involvement in development and the existence of formal development policies, shared responsibilities for development, competency-based development and a higher than average use of personal development plans. They also found that where an individual's line manager was involved in their development the impact of development was doubled. However, half their sample rated their line managers' involvement as low, thus suggesting that normative perceptions of extensive line manager involvement in development activities may be exaggerated.

With regard to what motivates managers (and professional developers) to develop others, the limited research to date (AMED, 1991; Mumford, 1993) suggests the following reasons:

1. to pursue the resolution of problems;
2. to give people skills to do their job;

3. managers believe that improving the performance of others will reflect well on their own'
4. personal satisfaction from seeing someone grow and develop to their full potential;
5. develop own skills, knowledge and insight;
6. employing organization demands they do so through formal development schemes; and,
7. to improve profitability or financial efficiency.

This paper explores what motivates voluntary sector managers to develop others.

Research Design

The aim of the overall study reported here was to identify the behaviours used by voluntary-sector senior and first-line managers when facilitating employee learning in the workplace. To address this aim five research questions were developed.

1. What do line managers do *to facilitate* learning?
2. What do line managers do *to inhibit* learning?
3. What *motivates* line managers to develop staff?
4. What influence do *individual* factors have on developmental behaviours?
5. What influence do *organizational* factors have on developmental behaviours?

The first, third and fifth questions have informed the development of this paper.

This study involved case-study research into two voluntary organizations providing a range of social care services, Quarriers and Richmond Fellowship Scotland (RFS). Quarriers is a multi-functional social care charity providing services for children, young people, families, people with epilepsy and people with learning disabilities. At the time of the fieldwork Quarriers employed nearly 1000 employees. Richmond Fellowship Scotland (RFS) is a social care charity specializing in providing services to support people with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems. At the time of the research RFS employed around 750 employees. While acknowledging the limitations of examining only two organizations, the author argues that this was appropriate given the exploratory nature of this research designed to address the paucity of empirical and theoretical research on this topic.

The two organizations were selected as it was hoped that they would provide *evidence* (Hamlin, 2002) of good practice. First, they are both recognized as Investors in People (IiP) and are regarded within the sector as being employers of choice. Second, as social care organizations they both have well-developed supervision policies which, it was hoped, would provide an insight-yielding context to explore the behaviours of managers when developing staff. Supervision in social care provides an explicit framework for line managers as developers and is a holistic approach to managing, teaching and supporting staff (Sawdon and Sawdon, 1995). It requires employees and their 'supervisors' to meet regularly to reflect on and plan for learning and work.

As this study was trying to understand and explain why people have different constructions and meanings regarding their developmental experiences at work a

qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate as such techniques 'seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world' (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 9).

The first phase of the study involved an initial period of ethnographic immersion to gain familiarity with the culture, language and operations of each organization. This involved the researcher spending three weeks in each organization visiting a range of operations and conducting informal interviews with staff; in effect, an 'induction' programme. The participant observation continued with participation in relevant training courses, such as induction or appraisal, and observation of meetings. The author has discussed the challenges of ethnographic research elsewhere (see Beattie, 2002b). The second phase included a series of intensive semi-structured interviews (n = 60), utilizing critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954), with senior line managers (SLM), first-line managers (FLM), employees and key informants (KI) such as Chief Executive or Director of HR. Forty-one developmental relationships, learning partnerships between a line manager and their direct reports, were explored.

Managers and employees were asked questions regarding managerial behaviours that facilitated employee learning and organisational factors that might influence learning. The data was then analysed utilising a grounded theory approach, given the lack of existing theory, to identify the facilitative behaviours demonstrated by line managers and their interaction with workplace factors. Findings have been presented using the impersonal pronoun and codes to minimise identification of respondents.

Findings and Discussion

This section of the paper presents and discusses the results of the study by, first, outlining the behaviours identified through analysis of developmental interactions. Second, it explores how these behaviours interact with organizational factors and, finally, highlights some of the outcomes for individuals and organizations.

Developmental Behaviours

Analysis of interview data revealed a hierarchy of developmental behaviours (see Figure 1) that occurred across developmental interactions (see Table 1 for definition of all behaviours). Developmental interactions occurred within a range of contexts, including formal and informal supervisory sessions or through everyday work activities such as care of service users and meetings. These interactions provided evidence of the nature of the learning relationships.

Behaviours, such as *caring, informing* and *being professional*, are at the foundation levels of the hierarchy because these are closest to the 'professional' backgrounds[2] of the managers and were found to be practised by most of the managers studied. More sophisticated and demanding facilitation behaviours, such as *empowering* and *challenging*, are at the higher levels of the hierarchy and were less frequently observed. The expertise required for these latter behaviours was acquired by managers as they gained experience and/or progressed up the managerial career ladder, and saw managers demonstrating significant facilitation expertise where they
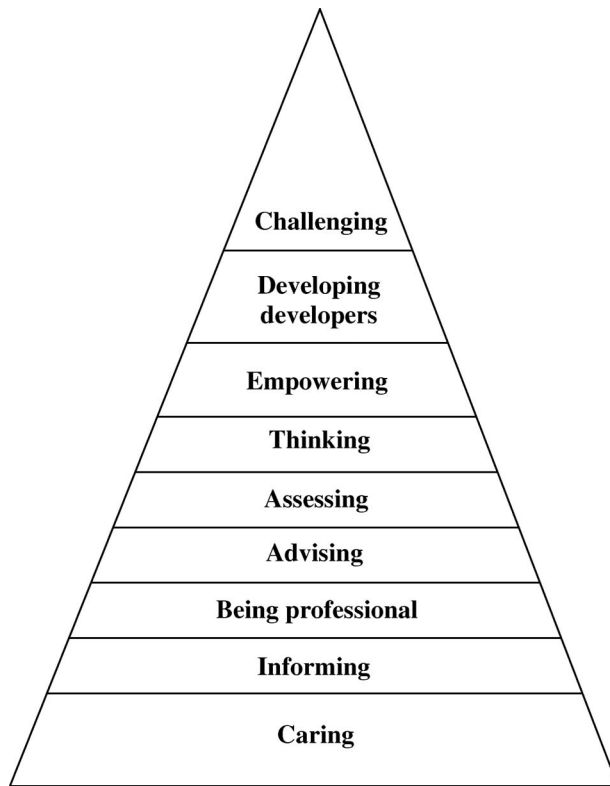
Figure 1. Hierarchy of facilitative behaviours

were helping individuals to help themselves rather than providing 'right and wrong answers' (Raelin, 1999, p. 147).

Interaction with Organizational Factors

Learning culture. Both organizations have similar missions. These are to help individuals overcome or minimize disadvantage by focusing on the needs and rights of individuals and to help them live as independently as possible. To fulfil these missions the strategic policies of both organizations echo similar themes, such as quality, continuous improvement and standards. Of particular relevance to this study were their aspirations to become *learning organizations*. This could be seen in the language used in policy documents and in respondents' statements: 'It's a learning organization; you're always learning' (Employee 4, Quarriers).

The cultures of both organizations are based on their commitment to social care models of practice and person-centred planning. The translation of these values into everyday practice was confirmed by respondents at all levels. This was exemplified by the author's visit to one of Quarriers' projects where a team leader described how they saw the philosophy of the organization as one which 'gets staff

Table 1. Facilitative behaviours

Category	Behaviours	Description
Caring	Supporting	To give aid or courage to
	Encouraging	Inspiring or instilling confidence
	Being approachable	Easy to approach
	Reassuring	To relieve anxiety
	Being committed/involved	Gives time
	Empathizing	Showing understanding of another's situation
Informing	Sharing knowledge	Transmission of information
Being professional	Role modelling	Behaving in a manner that people respect & wish to emulate
	Standard setting	Outlining or encouraging an acceptable level of performance or quality
	Planning & preparing	Organizing and structuring learning
Advising	Instructing	Directing an individual in a specific task
	Coaching	Discussion & guided activity
	Guiding	Providing advice
	Counselling	Helping others take control of their own behaviour and solve problems
Assessing	Providing feedback and recognition	Letting someone know how they are performing and acknowledging their achievements
	Identifying development needs	Assessing what is required to enhance current performance or career development
Thinking	Reflective or prospective thinking	Process of taking time to consider what has happened in the past or may happen in the future
	Clarifying	Process of making something clearer or easier to understand
Empowering	Delegating	To give duties, responsibilities to another
	Trusting	Having confidence in someone
Developing developers	Developing developers	Stimulating the acquisition of skills & knowledge by employees to develop others
	Challenging	Stimulating people to stretch themselves

to think about the dreams and aspirations of service users and tries to help them achieve as much as possible' (Employee 2, Quarriers). The physical evidence of these values could be seen in this project, and others visited by the author, with person-centred plans and their realization being presented graphically on the walls of the house. The team leader also acknowledged that this philosophy had been beneficial to them personally by making them more self-aware and more open to new ideas.

Of particular interest to this study was whether managers transferred the organizations' human-centred approaches to social care to employee development. Respondents, at all levels, confirmed that these were indeed transferred to workplace learning:

> I think the culture is very much about being an enabling organization, and enabling not only the clients that we come into contact with but also the members of staff.

> (SLM4, RFS)

> I know from my personal experience that the Project Leader and team leaders are always trying to . . . do the best for every staff member so that it helps our service users.

> (Employee 9, Quarriers)

> Putting the people we work with at the centre of our work is really important and that comes across through person-centred planning and also in terms of staff development. So I think there is always a link; you can't separate out how we work with staff from how we work with service users.

> (KI2, Quarriers)

First, and fundamentally, caring behaviours were recognized, by managers, employees and key informants, as contributing to the creation of positive learning environments, for example through encouragement of staff ideas. 'You do feel quite motivated when you know there is *encouragement* from your manager that what you want to do is important' (Employee 19, Quarriers).

Second, a common feature of the developmental interactions explored was the psychological security (Schein, 1993; Woodall and Douglas, 2000) felt by many staff. This was particularly seen in those interactions involving behaviours such as being approachable: 'FLM5 is the kind of person you can say anything to . . . and [they're] not going to take offence at what you're going to say . . . there's not a fear' (Employee 15, Quarriers).

Marsick and Watkins (1997) describe developmental managers as being able to present challenges to staff and this more sophisticated behaviour was demonstrated by a minority of managers in this study's sample. Examples included challenging employees to break out of their comfort zone by applying for promotion or by challenging individuals to work answers out for themselves rather than spoon-feeding them. A first-line manager demonstrated the value of such learning, which resulted in them asking one of their previous managers (SLM2, RFS) to become their mentor.

> They never told you. They always made you work it out for yourself . . . asking you questions, kept asking you more . . . . Probably I developed more in that eight-month period than I did in the previous four years.
>
> (FLM3, RFS)

Managers also played an important role in transferring organizational culture and learning values. For example, one described how they had helped an employee moving into the organization 'understand the different culture' (SLM5, Quarriers). In particular, line managers were seen as having a significant influence on culture at a local level. 'Managers are understanding that learning is a cultural activity at the heart of service delivery, it's not separate' (KI1, Quarriers).

The development of local learning cultures involved letting people make mistakes, and treating people with respect, consistent with key principles of andragogy (see Knowles *et al.*, 1998), as illustrated by the following line manager: 'I think it is about having the culture right; that people know you're not perfect. That mistakes are all right and most are actually remedied quite quickly' (FLM3, RFS). The same manager used football as a metaphor to describe how they were trying to create a culture where their staff saw themselves as the 'best team' in the organization.

> It's about promoting a culture that we're the best . . . I think that's quite important because people feel good about going to their work and that they're working for a joint cause . . . . You're leading a team but you've got different positions. You're always going to have a star in every team but the rest of them have to work as hard and everybody should be appreciated for the things they do.

The development of local learning cultures was assisted by managers utilizing different approaches to learning, heightened by their awareness of adult learning principles communicated by organizational courses and publications. This insight was also filtering down to employees who were recognizing that training *per se* was not the only answer to development needs.

> I think at one time everybody thought that [learning] meant going on a training day but now we're into recognizing different ways of learning such as reading, getting a video or just having small coaching sessions.
>
> (RFS Employee 5)

HRD strategy and practice. Common themes emerged from the HRD strategies of RFS and Quarriers. These included the desire to maintain IiP accreditation, recognition of the role of line managers in HRD processes, encouragement of staff to take responsibility for their own learning and expansion of accredited training such as Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). There were also explicit links made between learning and quality, with both strategies aiming to support the continuous improvement of staff and ultimately services. Another common feature was using language that emphasized learning rather than training.

The transfer of values from social care to employee development could also be seen in HRD practices such as: the supervision and appraisal processes, which mirror

person-centred planning; the development of individual learning and development plans; learning portfolios kept by staff.

A central element of both organizations' HRD strategies is the pivotal role that line managers play in supervision and appraisal. Supervision is the pivotal element in an organizational learning system which links organizational processes such as induction, quality standards, appraisal and learning opportunities (see Figure 2). The contribution of line managers to this learning system was stressed by a key informant while recognizing the challenges line managers faced in facilitating learning.

> [Line managers set] the tone of what is expected, modelling and encouraging learning attitudes in the workplace . . . . The role of a line manager as developer is actually very complex and multi-faceted . . . . They've got to be both managing the performance of an individual ensuring that the outputs of that performance are correct and appropriate, and at the same time they've got to be running development objectives alongside and seeing the work as a means of developing people. I'm conscious there is quite a debate there. First and foremost people are there to provide a service. I would argue that the way they provide that service is itself a learning activity for people.
>
> (KI1, Quarriers)

Quarriers, for example, outlined the responsibilities of managers in development as including: assessment of training and development needs; induction; support and supervision; providing clear information; on-the-job instruction, coaching and counselling; improving performance; being positive role models (IiP Storyboard, 1998). These responsibilities are reflected in many of the behaviours identified above in Figure 1, such as: assessing, caring, informing, advising and being professional.
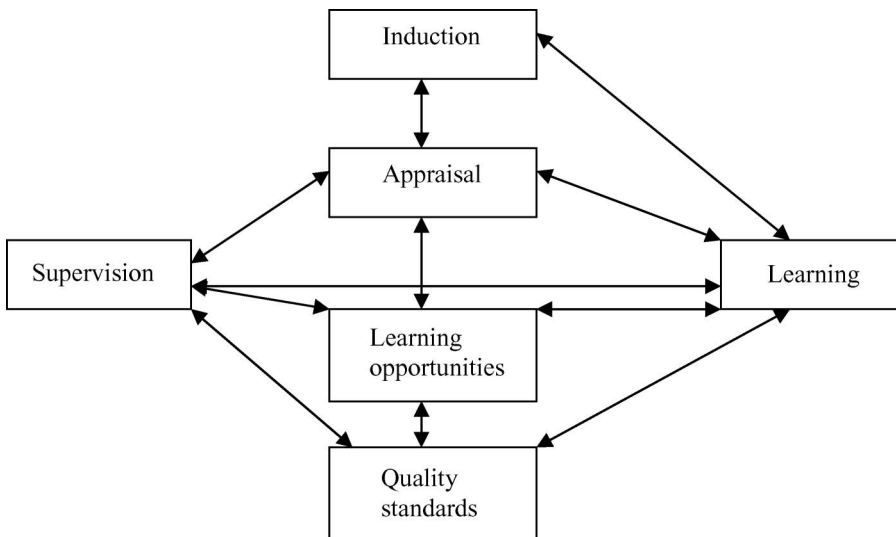

Figure 2. Organizational framework for supporting learning

Managerial responsibility for learning is most clearly seen in managers' contributions to the supervisory processes of both organizations.

A first-line manager indicates below how this framework guides their developmental responsibilities:

> Supervision is a process that is naturally there where I am expected to perform in a certain way; supervisees are expected to perform in a certain way. So the system is there to support the developmental role.
>
> (FLM3, Quarriers)

Both organizations have explicit supervision policies stating the purpose and frequency of supervision, appraisal and training needs analysis. Critical incidents involving supervision showed individuals and their managers identifying learning opportunities and reflecting on and evaluating learning opportunities experienced. Supervision also enabled managers to reinforce expected standards of performance. It is argued here that the frequency of these meetings contributes to the development of trust necessary for the effective functioning of *learning partnerships* (Probst and Büchel, 1997).

Concerns have been expressed that social care supervision has not fulfilled its potential due to managers lacking facilitative skills and having limited understanding of adult learning theory (Sawdon and Sawdon, 1995; Hughes and Pengelly, 1997). Both organizations addressed this by providing courses, on supervision, appraisal, training for trainers and coaching, designed to maximize the links with practice. Increasingly, such training incorporated content on adult learning theory to 'help people see that people may be approaching things in a different way because of their learning style' (KI3, Quarriers).

Managers had also learnt how to be developers through experiential learning, for example by reflecting on how their own managers had facilitated their learning, particularly through supervision.

> I think what has been best for me has been having a manager who's been good at that. [A manager] who I have felt developed me, who's given me a chance to stretch my wings a bit and find out what I am capable of.
>
> (SLM1, RFS)

Finally, both employees and managers recognized that supervision was a major source of learning.

> I thought it was great you had someone giving you this reassurance, direction if required and feedback on what you were doing.
>
> (FLM 5, RFS)

> In my previous job [in the private sector] I never got any supervision or reviews. I never had the opportunity to air my concerns or say anything at all about my job or about what I was doing or what I thought about anything I was doing. Since I came here it's been very in-depth ...' how have you felt about this and are you clear about that?' ... I think it is really, really good.
>
> (Employee 3, Quarriers)

Learning and Work Practice

Developmental interactions focusing on work practice related either to direct social care or to management duties.

Marsick and Watkins (1997) suggest managers can draw out lessons from experience for future circumstances, and surface assumptions and tacit beliefs that help with understanding. This could be seen frequently in supervisory interactions where managers stimulated their staff to think more about their actions and behaviours by reflecting on past experiences to inform future practice.

This is demonstrated by a senior line manager encouraging a middle manager to engage in reflective practice, particularly when negotiating with potential contractors.

> Through supervision we look for opportunities in learning from one situation to the next. We would deliberately take time after situations and think about how can we make it better the next time.
>
> (SLM 5, Quarriers)

Another example relates to the practice of supervision itself.

> [They – LM3] give tips on how supervision should be. It's like obviously you can't supervise everybody in the same way; people don't learn the same way nor need the same support as the next person.
>
> (Employee 12, RFS)

Discussions on work practice also involved helping staff solve problems or deal with issues.

> [They – LM5] gave me some pointers to think about when I was dealing with the situation [tension between service users] and [they] obviously made sure I felt comfortable with the situation.
>
> (Employee 16, Quarriers)

Managers also demonstrated willingness to assess the short and long-term development needs of staff, reinforcing organizational policies for appraisal and career development, as well as supporting succession planning for the organizations.

> as well as it [development] being a priority for the project and the organisation I can see that [they] also think along the lines of my development . . . that makes me feel valued . . . and it inspires enthusiasm (Employee 4, RFS).

> I've been placing responsibility on both of us to look at learning opportunities that might help longer-term career development (SLM6, Quarriers).

Motivation to Support Learning

All managers accepted, and many welcomed, having some responsibility for facilitating the learning of their staff.

> I really firmly believe *that* unless we know our staff and unless we know what their development needs are and the areas in which they excel and which could be utilized I really don't think we can provide a quality service unless as managers we know that about the people that work for us.
>
> (FLM4)

Two main motivators emerged. One was ensuring staff met organizational standards of performance. The second motivator was the satisfaction of helping someone else to develop.

> It is important for me that the reputation of the organization is good and that's not just what I do but obviously it's what the people that I am responsible for do as well. So it's important that I'm developing people.
>
> (FLM5, Quarriers)

> It was a really powerful thing as a supervisor [to see someone achieve]…when you've got that gut instinct [that] people can do it…. I get a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from seeing someone develop.
>
> (FLM5, RFS)

Individual and Organizational Outcomes

A range of positive individual outcomes from facilitative developmental interactions was reported. These included: effective induction; learning new work practices; stress management; and confidence-building. There was also evidence that managers were helping individuals to improve their abilities to be reflective practitioners.

> [I'm] more assertive, more confident in using my skills and also in what I'm talking to people about what my role and responsibility is, but also where that stops. I think it's made me critically evaluate my practice more.
>
> (Employee 3, RFS)

Another employee stressed that their manager's support had been critical to them embarking on and achieving an HND in their mid-fifties after leaving school with no qualifications. '[I]t wasn't like being at school…. I think there was probably a confidence in [them – FLM 5] that I knew [they] would make it OK' (Employee 15, Quarriers).

Positive organizational outcomes emerging from the interaction between managers' behaviours and organizational factors included: improved services for service users through role modelling; more effective teams; grassroots employees contributing to the development of services and operations encouraged by managerial recognition; improved morale; and improved communication.

> [FLM 5] does a lot of direct work with service users so staff see [them] working with service users, related professionals and carers. I think [they're] a good role model.
>
> (SLM3, RFS)

> We as a team can come to a happy medium where everybody has got a bit of input and no one feels that their opinion isn't valued.
>
> (Quarriers Employee 15)

> A couple of times I've done a wee certificate for a member of staff that's done a good piece of work or just little things in a team meeting, recognising somebody's success in front of everybody.
>
> (FLM1, Quarriers)

> When I've been with them [SLM5, Quarriers] I've always felt really valued . . . I'm re-energised.
>
> (Employee 19, Quarriers)

> I think a lot about that is sitting down together and trying to achieve clarity about what we are actually saying and where we are going.
>
> (SLM1, RFS)

Such outcomes were confirmed by recent independent social work inspection reports.

Finally, each organization's recognition as an Investor in People also confirms that managers were playing an active part in workplace learning by satisfying the standard's requirement that managers, at all levels, and individual employees can give examples of actions that managers have taken or are taking to support employee development.

Conclusion

The literature review revealed a growing interest in workplace learning (NSTF, 2000; IPD, 2000; Scottish Executive, 2003; Kirby *et al.*, 2003; Ardichvili, 2003). This study has confirmed that the workplace is an important site of learning and that line managers have a critical role to play, which is effectively articulated by the senior manager below.

> There is so much that actually goes on that you are able to help people develop and learn within that sort of [workplace] setting. There is nobody better equipped to do that than the managers who are there and with the people at that point in time.
>
> (SLM 2, RFS)

Woodall (2000) has rightly expressed concerns about workplace learning: first, the need for active promotion and support by managers in environments where there is limited opportunity for guided reflection, and, second, the need to have effective integration of workplace learning with other HRM processes, such as performance management. However, the organizations investigated here have provided lessons on how these issues can be addressed. RFS and Quarriers resolved the first through supervision, which provided regular opportunities for guided reflection, as could be seen in the development interactions in the thinking behaviour category. Moreover

Figure 2 depicts the organizational framework for learning and development, showing that both organizations have addressed Woodall's second concern by adopting a systematic and integrated approach to learning and development.

The HRD strategies and learning climates created in both organizations, building on the person-centred values of social care, contributed to the support systems (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Wilson, 1999; Horowitz, 1999; Thomson *et al.*, 2001) available in each organization. This suggests that developmental humanism still has a part to play in modern HRD where the environment is conducive to it flourishing, unlike the environments researched by McGovern *et al.* (1997). The most important element in this learning system is supervision, providing a pivotal link between individuals and their manager, and between individuals and the organization as a whole. It is argued here that such regular one-to-one development and performance discussions provide the conditions for rapport and trust to be developed, critical for meaningful developmental relationships.

Beckett (1999) and the IPD (2000) argued respectively that to support workplace learning effectively managers need to understand the theory and practices of adult and workplace learning. This was addressed by both organizations through the provision of training courses, publications and experiential learning to help managers with their developmental responsibilities, as well as emphasizing the importance of the workplace as a site of learning opportunities. Of particular note was the hierarchy of behaviours revealed in this study, which, the author argues, needs to be taken account of when organizations and management development specialists are developing management development programmes and considering the devolution of HRD responsibilities to line managers. Significantly there needs to be recognition that it takes time for managers to acquire the experience and confidence to demonstrate higher-level behaviours such as *empowering* and *challenging*.

This research has enhanced our understanding of the role of voluntary sector managers in supporting workplace learning and provides guidance to policy makers, academics and voluntary organizations about how to support the development of people development skills, which ultimately affect the effective performance of voluntary organizations. It is also argued that the lessons learned from this exploratory research will be of benefit beyond the voluntary sector, in particular by highlighting that the development of the trust required for effective developmental relationships demands regular contact between managers and employees and that line managers require development themselves to be effective facilitators of learning.

It is intended to replicate this research in organizations outside the voluntary sector and the social care field to test whether these behaviours are found in different organizational contexts. In the meantime the author, with colleagues from the UK and USA, has recently embarked on a comparative analysis of findings from research across the voluntary, public and private sectors to develop a more robust theoretical base relating to line managers as developers (citations provided once review process completed). To date, and perhaps surprisingly given the differing organizational environments, there has been significant corroboration. However, not unsurprisingly there is greater evidence of caring behaviours in the voluntary sector. Some contrasting behaviours have been found, in particular related to challenging which was seen as facilitating in this study whereas in a study of the corporate sector

(citation to be provided) it was seen as inhibiting learning. Ultimately this growing body of knowledge will strengthen the theoretical and evidential base of HRD and contribute to improving the efficacy of HRD practice.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Now the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).
2 Many of the managers had a social care or nursing qualification and/or experience.

References

AMED (1991) *Developing the Developers: Improving the Quality of the Professionals who Develop People and Organisations* (London: AMED).

Ardichvili, A. (2003) Constructing socially situated learning experiences in human resource development: an activity theory, *Human Resource Development International*, 6(1), pp. 5–20.

Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (2001) *Human Resource Management: A Contemporary Approach* (Harlow: FT/Prentice Hall).

Beattie, R. S. (2002a) Developmental managers: line managers as facilitators of workplace learning in voluntary organisations, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow.

Beattie, R. S. (2002b) Going native: ethnographic research in HRD, in: J. McGoldrick, J. Stewart and S. Watson (Eds) *Understanding Human Resource Development: A Research-Based approach* (London: Routledge).

Beattie, R. S. (2006) Environmental, organisational and individual influences on managers roles as developers, in: S. Sambrook and J. Stewart (Eds) *Human Resource Development in the Health and Social Care Context* (London: Routledge), forthcoming.

Beckett, D. (1999) The new organic management learning, in: D. Boud and J. Garrick (Eds) *Understanding Learning at Work* (London: Routledge).

Bell, E. (1999) Changing the line of sight on payment systems: a study of shop-floor workers and managers within the British chemical industry, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(5), pp. 924–40.

Bevan, S. and Hayday, S. (1994) *Towing the Line: Helping Managers to Manage People* (Brighton: Institute of Manpower Studies).

Bratton, J. and Gold, J. (1994) *Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Boyne, G., Jenkins, G. and Poole, M. (1999) Human resource management in the public and private sectors: an empirical comparison, *Public Administration*, 77(2), pp. 407–20.

Burgoyne, J. and Hodgson, V. (1983) Natural learning and managerial action: a phenomenological study in the field of setting, *Journal of Management Studies*, 20(3), pp. 387–99.

Cabinet Office (1991) *Developing People for Results through the Line* (London: HMSO).

Cabinet Office (1993) *Encouraging and Supporting the Delegation of Human Resource Development Responsibilities to the Line* (London: HMSO).

Colley, H., Hodkinson, P. and Malcolm, J. (2003) *Informality and Formality in Learning* (London: Learning and Skills Research Centre).

de Jong, J., Leenders, F. and Thijssen, J. (1999) HRD tasks of first-level managers, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 11(5), pp. 176–83.

Ellinger, A. (2003) Antecedents and consequences of coaching behavior, *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 16(1), pp. 176–83.

Ellinger, A. and Bostrom, R. (1999) Managerial coaching behaviours in learning organizations, *Journal of Management Development*, 18(9), pp. 752–71.

Ellinger, A., Beattie, R. and Hamlin, R. (2005) The good, the bad and the ugly: ineffective coaching/ facilitating learning behaviours, paper presented at The European HRD Conference, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, May.

Eraut, M., Alderton, J., Cole, G. and Senker, P. (1998) *Development of Knowledge and Skills in Employment*, final report on a research project funded by the ESRC Learning Society Programme.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954) The critical incident technique, *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), pp. 327–59.

Garavan, T., Costine, P. and Heraty, N. (1995) The emergence of strategic human resource development, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 19(10), pp. 4–10.

Garrick, D. (1998) *Informal Learning in the Workplace* (London: Routledge).

Hamlin, R. (2002) Towards evidence-based HRD practice, in: J. McGoldrick, J. Stewart and S. Watson (Eds) *Understanding Human Resource Development: A Research-Based Approach* (London: Routledge).

Hamlin, R. G., Ellinger, A. D. and Beattie, R. S. (2004) In support of coaching models of management and leadership: a comparative study of empirically derived managerial coaching/facilitating learning behaviours, AHRD International Research Conference 2004, Austin, Texas, March.

Heraty, N. and Morley, M. (1995) Line managers and human resource development, *Journal of European and Industrial Training*, 19(10), pp. 31–7.

Horowitz, F. (1999) The emergence of strategic training and development: the current state of play, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 23(4–5), pp. 180–90.

Hughes, L. and Pengelly, P. (1997) *Staff Supervision in a Turbulent Environment: Managing Process and Task in Front-Line Services* (London: Jessica Kingsley).

Hyman, J. and Cunningham, I. (1998) Managers as developers: some reflections on empowerment in Britain, *International Journal of Training and Development*, 2(2), pp. 91–107.

IPD (1995) *Personnel and the Line* (London: IPD).

IPD (2000) *Success through Learning: The Argument for Strengthening Workplace Learning* (London: IPD).

Kirby, J., Knapper, C., Evans, C., Carty, A. and Gadula, C. (2003) Approaches to learning at work and workplace climate, *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(1), pp. 31–52.

Knowles, M. S., Holton III, E. F. and Swanson, R. (1998) *The Adult Learner*, 5th edn (Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann).

Legge, K. (1995) *Human Resource Management: Rhetorics and Realities* (London: Macmillan).

MacNeil, C. (2003) The line manager as facilitator of team learning and change, in: M. Lee (Ed.) *HRD in a Complex World* (London: Routledge).

McGovern, P., Hope-Hailey, V. and Stiles, P. (1997) Human resource management on the line?, *Human Resource Management Journal*, 7(4), pp. 12–29.

Marsick, V. J. and Volpe, M. (1999) The nature and need for informal learning, in: V. J. Marsick and M. Volpe (Eds) *Informal Learning on the Job*, Advances in HRD No 3 (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler).

Marsick, V. J. and Watkins, K. (1997) Lessons from informal and incidental learning, in: J. Burgoyne and M. Reynolds (Eds) *Management Learning: Integrating Perspectives in Theory and Practice* (London: Sage).

Morgan, P. and Allington, N. (2002) Has the public sector retained its model employer status?, *Public Money and Management*, January–March, pp. 35–42.

Mumford, A. (1993) *How Managers Can Develop Managers* (Aldershot: Gower).

NSTF (2000) *Third Report of the National Skills Taskforce: Tackling the Adult Skills Gap: Upskilling Adults and the Role of Workplace Learning* (London: DfEE).

Probst, G. and Büchel, B. (1997) *Organizational Learning: The Competitive Advantage of the Future* (London: Prentice Hall).

Quarriers (1998) *IiP Storyboard* (Quarriers).

Raelin, J. (2000) *Work-Based Learning: The New Frontier of Management Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).

Rainbird, H. (2000) *Training in the Workplace* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Reynolds, J., Caley, L. and Mason, R. (2002) *How Do People Learn?* (London: CIPD).

Sawdon, C. and Sawdon, D. (1995) The supervision partnership: a whole greater than the sum of its parts, in: J. Pritchard (Ed.) *Good Practice in Supervision: Statutory and Voluntary Organisations* (London: Jessica Kingsley).

Schein, E. (1993) How can organizations learn faster? The challenge of entering the green room, *Sloan Management Review*, Winter, pp. 85–92.

Scottish Executive (2003) *Life through Learning, Learning through Life: The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive).

Stewart, J. and McGoldrick, J. (1996) *Human Resource Development: Perspectives, Strategies and Practice* (London: Pitman).

Storey, J. (1992) *Management of Human Resources* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Storey, J. (Ed.) (1995) *Human Resource Management: A Critical Text* (London: Routledge).

Thomson, A., Mabey, C., Storey, J., Gray, C. and Iles, P. (2001) *Changing Patterns of Management Development* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Van Maanen, J. (1983) *Qualitative Methodology* (London: Sage).

Wilson, J. (1999) *Human Resource Development: Learning and Training for Individuals and Organisations* (London: Kogan Page).

Woodall, J. (2000) Corporate support for work-based management development, *Human Resource Management Journal*, 10(1), pp. 18–32.

Woodall, J. and Douglas, D. (2000) Winning hearts and minds: ethical issues in human resource development, in: D. Winstanley and J. Woodall (Eds) *Ethical Issues in Contemporary Human Resource Management* (London: Macmillan).