

What do job advertisements reveal about HRD practitioners in New Zealand?

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There is a paucity of research in the area of Human Resource Development (HRD) in New Zealand (Kerr, 1994; Elkin & Inkson, 1995). Too often HRD is given minimal attention in Human Resource Management (HRM) surveys (Gilbertson, Fogelberg & Boswell, 1989; Stablein & Geare, 1993; Cleland, Pajo & Toulson, 2000), or is of relevance only to special interest groups such as the New Zealand Employers' Federation (1989, 1992, 1994b) surveys. The purpose of this study is to analyse a sample of HRD job advertisements to provide baseline information about the HRD practitioners sought by employers in New Zealand. 587 HRM job advertisements from The New Zealand Herald, The Dominion, and The Press throughout 1996 were coded into a database using content analysis. Results show that HRD represents approximately one third of all HRM activity with 200 (34%) of the 587 advertisements specifically requesting HRD skills. Personnel management with 301 (51%) advertisements dominated the skills sought by employers. Of significance is the dearth of entry-level HRD positions, and the preference for generalist practitioners as opposed to more specialist HRD practitioners.

Introduction

In 1993 as part of their standard economic survey of New Zealand the OECD chose to focus on New Zealand's human capital. Internationally the OECD (1993, p.70) said, "...comprehensive structural reforms and substantial investment in advanced technologies have not generated the expected productivity pay-off; large numbers of unemployed have coexisted with supply bottlenecks in labour markets". For many countries like New Zealand, they argue, the structural changes have not been matched by changes to the skills of the people needed to take up the new technologies. The OECD (1993, p. 70) then states "...there are specific factors suggesting that skill development might be even more important to New Zealand than generally elsewhere". This, they suggest, is due to the fact that New Zealand's post-war growth record is the worst among the OECD countries.

The fear that New Zealand has a skills shortage and will struggle to compete in the global economy been voiced since the late 1980s. In 1990 the New Zealand Employers' Federation (1990, p.1) stated unequivocally that "...unless New Zealand employers are prepared to become investors in training, and develop the full potential of all their present and future employees, the economic outlook will indeed be bleak". This was supported by Crocombe, Enright, & Porter (1991) who noted New Zealand firms had tended not to make heavy investments in human-resource development. The exceptions identified were companies such as Fletcher Challenge, or the subsidiaries of foreign multinationals. Few companies in the twenty New Zealand industries Porter studied had organised training programmes or invested in developing the specialised skills required to be competitive in their industry.

In response to such issues the National Government published the discussion document "The Government's New Industry Skills Training Strategy" (ETSA, 1991). In this document, the government argued that for New Zealand to be internationally competitive, and maintain a high

standard of living, it required a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. The development of an improved industry skills training system was seen as crucial to the creation of a distinctly New Zealand "training culture". The resulting legislation was the Industry Training Act 1992 that created industry training organisations (ITOs) and provided seed funding to develop standards and facilitate training for the industries they represented.

What the government's discussion document did not address was the HRD capacity of private and public enterprise. With the proliferation of unit standards and industry training organisations (51 as at 31 July 1997), little attention has been given to the HRD practitioners who are to design, develop and implement the training required by industry (ETSA, 1997). Given the relative anonymity of HRD practitioners in the New Zealand HRM literature, what HRD positions are being advertised and what do they say about New Zealand's approach to HRD?

The Place of Human Resource Development (HRD)

It is acknowledged that for HRM practitioners to be taken seriously they must understand the business or industry within which they work (Boxall, 1994). The place of the HRD practitioner is, in a conceptual sense, firmly secured in the area of strategic human resource management (Wright, 1998). Strategic human resource management (SHRM) as defined by Wright and McMahan (1992, p.298) is "...the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organisation to achieve its goals".

This definition highlights two important dimensions of HRD. First, the vertical dimension links HRM practices with the strategic management process of the organisation. HRD as a key HRM practice has the role of developing employee competencies that may help the organisation achieve future goals. Second, the horizontal dimension focuses on the co-ordination amongst various HRM practices. HRD practices need to be integrated with other HRM practices such as recruitment and selection to avoid conflict and to promote the most efficient use of resources. While the area of SHRM has been described as an area of difficult definitions and contentious theory there is general agreement of the theoretical and practical value of SHRM (Boxall, 1994; Wright, 1998).

The place of HRD practitioners in New Zealand business is provided by Elkin and Inkson (1995), who suggest in the period from 1987 to 1989 the number of organisations who had specialist training staff fell from 50 per cent to 25 per cent, though no evidence was provided to support this assertion. Historically, they suggest, HRD people, like others in HRM, have tended to feel marginalised. This marginalisation of HRD they suggest has come from a number of sources that tended to reinforce one another. These include seeing HRD as a dumping ground for incompetent staff; there being a shortage of places to train to a professional standard; the small size of organisations; the need to combine all aspects of HRM into one job; a situation where New Zealand managers prefer to fly in expertise rather than developing or using their own; isolation from the real business of the organisation; and periodic rationalisation when things get tough for business. As a result there have been few role models or success stories to encourage business leaders and talented employees to take HRD seriously (Elkin & Inkson, 1995).

Roger Kerr (1994), the Executive Director of the New Zealand Business Roundtable, in a speech to the Institute for International Research Conference on Skill Development and Industry Training said:

There is no agreed or obvious definition of training, no definition of trainers, and no

one knows how many trainers there are. No one has any idea of the magnitude of on-the-job training or other forms of informal training. (p.161)

Kerr was responding to an assertion that New Zealand was under-investing in training. Kerr pointed out, correctly, that little knowledge of training activity in New Zealand existed to be able to make reasonable comparisons with other countries. While some of Kerr's assertions are questionable they do not hide the fact that research with regard to HRD in New Zealand is minimal.

Research on training activity in New Zealand is generally limited to two main examples: (a) the NZEF training surveys of June 1989, February 1992, and June 1994; and (b) the Research in Training in Auckland (RITA) group's survey of 1987 (McMorland, 1990). The New Zealand Employers' Federation [NZEF] Training Survey (1994a), of 673 members, excluding central government and publicly funded education institutions, focused on the gross training activity of its members. The surveys examined such things as funding of training, training providers, the type of training provided, and whether the training contributed to a recognised qualification. These surveys must be read with caution as the OECD (1993) has expressed doubts about the validity of particular statistics such as the percentage of payroll spent on training. For example the June 1994 survey showed that 3.48% of payroll was spent by employers on training which provided evidence, the NZEF argue, negating the need for an industry training levy. The difficulty with this figure was that only 25% of members recorded their training expenditure (NZEF, 1994b).

The purpose of the Research in Training in Auckland (RITA) group was to explore the state of training amongst Auckland enterprises, in particular the relationship between strategic planning and training. RITA's findings showed that 10 of the 72 enterprises derived training policy from their strategic plans; a figure RITA suggests is un-representatively low given qualitative comments. The content of training plans was shown to be reactive (remedial, problem solving, redressing imbalances), rather than proactive. Difficulties with sampling, interpretation of questions, and a lack of record keeping by organisations, they suggest, make it difficult to rely on the data (McMorland, 1990).

The most accessible starting point is provided by Australian research. In particular Moy (1991a, 1991b) identified 819 HRD positions through commonly available job advertisements in 1989; showing that the demand for HRD skills was primarily from the private sector with 60 percent of positions as compared to 29 percent for government jobs. The roles most sought were for that of the training and development officer/adviser/consultant with 584 (71%) of advertisements seeking such generalist skills. Training and development managers as a group followed next with 133 (17%) of advertisements. Moy (1991a) also identified that 24% of positions were newly created in specialist areas leading to speculation that HRD was becoming more specialised, involving new career paths and the possible formation of sub-professions.

The key HRD responsibilities gleaned from advertisements showed that instructing/ facilitating (65%), program design (52%), and administration (26%) rated highest. A trend was noted towards the professional as provider of advisory and diagnostic services with internal consulting (31%) and analysing needs/skill audits (26%). Points to be taken from the study were as follows:

- (1) the use of "training" or specialist job descriptors in job titles more frequently than "training and development" or "human resource development";
- (2) the expanded role of training oriented positions which focus on facilitating, internal consulting and needs analyses;
- (3) instructing is still a key responsibility for all levels of HRD practitioner; and,
- (4) newly created roles were more likely to incorporate broadened HRD roles, integrated with other human resource responsibilities.

As illustrated, research on HRD in New Zealand is limited. No research has addressed what HRD opportunities are available and what HRD skills are being sought. The purpose of the present study is to identify HRD activity in the form of job advertisements to provide a starting point in the discussion about HRD.

Method

Writers of advertisements, it is suggested, have to balance the need for a limited response versus convincing those with needed skills to abandon their current positions (Redman & Mathews, 1995). The use of job advertisements, as a data source, has been described by Redman & Mathews (1992) as a neglected area of research because it is seen as unimportant and unproblematic. Redman & Mathews (1995) suggest that while job advertisements are easily accessible they do provide insights into some of the complex changes and debates surrounding HRM. Moy (1991b) suggests that the main limitations associated with using job advertisements, as source data, are their incompleteness and that many positions are never advertised because they are filled internally or through recruitment agencies. What job advertisements do illustrate is the strength of demand for certain skills and the implications this may have for a particular occupational group.

The purpose of the sampling approach for the present study was to obtain a representative sample of HRM job advertisements to see what they reveal about HRD practitioners. In the present study human resource management job advertisements were taken from every edition of *The New Zealand Herald* (Saturday); *The Dominion* (Wednesday); *The Press* (Saturday) for 1996 using the microfilm collection in the Massey University Library. Wednesday and Saturday editions were selected because these are the two principal days on which jobs are advertised and are the editions that job seekers generally obtain (J. Harvey, personal communication, April 1997). Human resource development categories developed by Moy (1991a, 1991b) and McLagan (1989) for their studies, were used as coding guides.

As a guide, *ANZ Focus*, produced by the Economics Department of ANZ Banking Group (New Zealand) Limited, takes every job advertisement from seven newspapers but typically examines the large centres of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, roughly represented by one common newspaper such as *The New Zealand Herald*; *The Evening Post*; and *The Press*. *ANZ Focus* provides an excellent indicator of the overall picture of employment, and economic activity, and shows that total job advertisements had dropped by 2 per cent in 1996 to 285,880 from a high of 293,299 job advertisements in 1995. Job advertisements they argue are a key indicator of economic performance (ANZ Banking Group, 1997).

Each job advertisement was printed from microfilm and coded directly into a database. This allowed for ease of analysis and guarded against duplication. For example many government positions were advertised concurrently in all three newspapers. These “double ups” were removed with the advertisement being coded to the newspaper closest to the city of employment.

Results

Overall there was little difference in the total numbers of HRM positions advertised in *The Dominion* (236) and *The Herald* (253). By contrast few positions were advertised in *The Press* (98) and the South Island generally. Table 1 also shows that HRD with 200 (34%) job advertisements is a significant proportion of overall HRM activity.

Table 1: Number of HRM Job Advertisements by Newspaper

Newspaper	Personnel	HRD	Employee Relations	HRD/ Personnel	Total
Dominion	147	70	14	5	236
Herald	150	86	13	4	253
Press	44	44	10	0	98
Total	341	200	37	9	587

Table 2: Location of HRM Positions

Location	Personnel	HRD	Employee Relations	HRD\ Personnel	Total
Auckland	136	74	12	6	228
Wellington	141	73	9	3	226
Christchurch	34	31	7	0	72
Other	30	22	9	0	61
	341	200	37	9	587

Table 2 shows there were a relatively even number of HRM opportunities advertised in Auckland and Wellington and likewise for HRD. Given the larger population of the Auckland area it would not have been a surprise to see a greater difference in HRD positions advertised. The fact there is little difference between Auckland 74 (37%) and Wellington 73 (36%) requires further explanation (see Table 2). Firstly, the majority of the 83 (42%) government HRD advertised positions are, naturally, based in Wellington 38 (46%) as compared to Auckland 17 (20%) (see Table 6). The majority of the private enterprise advertised positions 86 (43%) are based in Auckland 47 (24%) compared to Wellington 22 (11%). From an HRD perspective, 33 (63%) of the 51 ITOs, as at 31 July 1997, were based in Wellington as compared to the 9 (17%) based in Auckland, reinforcing the trend of government HRM & HRD positions.

Table 3: Number of Human resource Development Positions by Title

Title of Development Position	Total	Percent
HRD / Training & Development Adviser	67	33.5
HRD / Training & Development Manager	54	27.0
Trainer – General	42	21.0
Training Administrator	31	15.5
Management Development Adviser	4	2.0
Instructional Designer	2	1.0
	200	100.0

Table 3 suggests that generalist HRD skills are the most sought after skills in the HRD market with few specialist positions available. The advertisements for general trainers, by contrast, were generally

seeking people to provide specialist training in areas such as customer service, computing, and horticulture. Remaining roles advertised included Management Developers 2.0% (4) and Instructional Designers 1.0% (2). The message seems clear. To participate in HRD in New Zealand one needs a broad range of skills and experiences and not to expect to work in one role. This conclusion is supported by Moy (1991c) who noted that prescriptive models, like McLagan's (1989) emphasising HRD specialities, were at odds with practice.

Table 4: Number of Human Resource Development Positions by Role

Primary Role	Total	Percent
Manager HRD	64	35.2
Internal Consultant	41	22.5
Instructor/ Facilitator	27	14.8
External Liaison	21	11.5
Administrator	12	6.6
Change Agent	5	2.7
Program Designer	3	1.6
Materials Developer	3	1.6
Career Development	2	1.1
Strategic HRD Planner	2	1.1
Needs Analyst	1	0.5
Total	182	100.0

*NB Coding categories taken from McLagan (1989).

Table 4 indicates the primary roles advertised by organisations are someone to lead and manage their HRD function followed by a generalist proficient in HRD practices. On examination of the content of the advertisements, as opposed to the titles of the jobs as discussed above, the primary role desired by employers is that of managing the HRD function with 35% (64) requesting this focus (see Table 4). The role of all-round internal consultant was next with 23% (41) reflecting the HRD Adviser's job of being the expert in all things HRD. The role of instructor/facilitator came next, with 15% (27) of positions having this as their primary focus.

Following the instructor's role was the external liaison's role 12% (21) and the administrator's role 7% (12), which are both peculiar to many of the government HRD positions. Primary roles of lesser note include a number of change agents 3% (5), material developers 2% (3), program designers 1.6% (3), career development advisers 1% (2), strategic HRD planners 1% (2), and needs analysts 0.5% (1). Again, analysis of the content of the HRD advertisements, as opposed to the title, supports the conclusion of a generalist emphasis for HRD practitioners.

Table 5: Qualifications of Human Resource Development Positions by Level

Level	Qualifications Requested		Total	Percent
	No	Yes		
Manager	36	23	59	29.5
Senior	42	24	66	33.0
Intermediate	48	27	75	37.5
Entry-level	0	0	0	0.0
	126	74	200	100

Table 5 is most notable for what it omits - entry-level positions that graduates of HRM or HRD could logically apply for. Table 5 possibly also reflects two further themes: (1) that recruiters will assume prospective applicants will have tertiary qualifications; or (2) recruiters do not see qualifications as important in HRD as requisite experience.

The level of HRM and HRD positions advertised reveals the particular market newspaper advertising caters to: those with HRM experience (see Table 5). That 29.5% (173) of total HRM positions advertised for a manager is not surprising considering the manager was often the sole person responsible for the HRM function. This is supported in HRD with 59 (30%) positions advertised asking for a manager, usually with a broad range of HRD experience (see Table 5). HRD manager positions were usually simple to code because the advertisement title simply said manager.

Similarly there were 66 (33%) positions advertised for senior staff and 75 (37%) for intermediate staff with no entry-level positions advertised in HRD. The defining characteristics of advertisements for senior positions were responsibilities for other employees, technical expertise that could come only from lengthy experience, and stated terms of experience. Intermediate positions were generally for those candidates that had a minimum of two to three years experience in an HR function, or two to three years work experience with an interest or qualifications in HRM.

Table 6: HRD Positions by Type of Organisation and Location

Organisation Type	Location				Total
	Wellington	Auckland	Christchurch	Other	
Central Government	38	17	13	15	83
Private Enterprise	22	47	12	5	86
Non-profit	5	6	5	1	17
Local Government	.	.	.	1	1
Not Stated	9	3	1	—	13
Total	74	73	31	22	200

Table 6 reflects a noteworthy balance in the New Zealand market for HRD skills with Auckland dominating the demand for HRD skills in the private sector and Wellington dominating the demand for HRD skills in the public sector.

Table 7: Human Resource Development positions by Industry

Industry	Total	Industry	Total
Education & Training	48	Employment	4
Manufacturing	24	Defence	4
Justice	14	Consultancy	3
Regulatory (Tax etc.)	13	Tourism	3
Health	13	Energy	2
Banking & Finance	12	Entertainment	2
Professional / Service	7	Information Tech	2
Telecommunications	7	Construction	2
Retail/ Wholesale	7	Media & Publishing	1
Transportation	5	Recruitment	1
Welfare	5	FMCG	1

Information Services

5 Not Stated

15

Total

200

HRD skills were sought by numerous industries ranging from manufacturing 24 (12%) and banking and finance 12 (6%) to health 13 (7%) and justice 14 (7%) (see Table 7). The education and training industry with 48 (24%) of the total HRD advertisements is dominated by ETSA and small training providers, private training enterprises (PTEs). It was not uncommon for ETSA advertisements to be placed concurrently in the three newspapers sampled for positions in the provinces. The demand for applicants with a strong background in Maori language (Te Reo) and culture (Tikanga), along with a training and development background was evident given the frequency of some advertisements. Manufacturing with 12 per cent was represented by such large businesses such as Cater Holt, Fletcher Challenge and Fisher & Paykel.

Discussion

Thirty four percent (200) of the human resource management (HRM) positions advertised in 1996 were advertised primarily as human resource development (HRD) positions. This suggests that HRD's relative absence from New Zealand HRM research does not reflect the significance of HRD. This result supports the views of Storey (1989) and Keep (1992) that suggests HRD is a central element of any strategic approach to HRM and deserving of attention. This result supports Cleland, Pajo and Toulsons' (2000) survey of Institute of Personnel Management New Zealand (IPMNZ) members that showed the greatest specialisation in HRM was indeed HRD. Once again, though, HRD was subsumed within the greater topic of HRM.

With no comparative data available it is difficult to know if this ratio of HRD to HRM has a historical basis, or whether this reflects the increasing demand for HRD positions in general. As the ANZ Banking Group (1997) advertisements survey shows, over 1996, job advertising in total dropped 2% compared to 1995. To give an indication of the changes in job advertising, job advertising was at its low point in 1991 with a total of 114 526 jobs advertised in the three main centres. By contrast at its height in 1995, 293 299 jobs were advertised. In 1996, 285 880 jobs were advertised with the steady decline in 1996 continuing into 1997 (ANZ Banking Group, 1997).

The highest demand in HRD for the 200 positions advertised, as represented by job titles, is for HRD Advisers with 34%(67) with HRD Managers close behind with 27% (54). Together these two roles represent 61% of the total HRD positions advertised. Collectively they represent 21% of the total HRM positions advertised in 1996 (see Tables 3 & 4). In many ways these are similar roles with both requiring a broad range of HRD experiences from writing training policy, facilitating training, to designing training.

The present study supports Moy's (1991a) findings in Australia where the primary demand was for generalist HRD skills. If there is one primary difference between Moy's results and the present study, it is that in Australia there were more opportunities for specialist HRD roles as compared to New Zealand. The remaining roles of significance, in the present study, were the training administrator 16% (31) and the general trainer 21% (42). The training administrator was generally a government role liaising with numerous external agencies and clients, and they did not engage in designing or giving training themselves but rather provided information and advice.

Given that only newspapers in the three main centres were targeted it is difficult to comment on the demand for HRD in the provinces. Anecdotally it would appear that the demand for HRD is confined

to larger organisations that are not as prevalent in the provinces. The majority of positions advertised for the provinces were government positions with departments such as the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) that promote and support the government's training initiatives.

The primary term of employment is full-time with 91 per cent of job advertisements requesting full-time employees. There is little evidence of alternative employment arrangements, though these options may not be provided in the job advertisement. The use of term contracts in 6 per cent of advertisements would suggest the employment of individuals with HRM skills in consulting roles, or in meeting parental leave obligations under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987. The effect of this legislation is that organisations would advertise for an individual to take up a term contract while the incumbent is on parental leave (Deeks, Parker & Ryan, 1994).

Recruitment agencies were used for advertising HRD positions in 31 per cent (62) of advertisements with the leading agencies being Morgan & Banks (10), Sheffield Consulting (9), and The Training Network (4). A total of 30 agencies were noted with 19 advertising once only; while the majority of positions, 69 per cent (138), did not use a recruitment agency for their HRD positions. By contrast, in Britain it is estimated that 60 per cent of recruitment advertising was placed through agencies (Redman & Mathews, 1995).

The results, showing that no entry-level positions were advertised in HRD (see Table 5), send a blunt message to recent HRM graduates, with no work experience, that looking in the newspapers for HRD positions is not going to help their self esteem. What the lack of entry-level positions may reflect, other than they are easier vacancies to fill, is that employers', as indicated by Hunt & Boxall (1998), prefer individuals who have had experience outside of HRM. Graduates with qualifications in HRM may need to consider gaining experience outside of HRM to give them a better strategic perspective on business.

Following this theme, Table 5 shows that in only 37% of HRD job advertisements were tertiary qualifications requested; as suggested, this reflects possibly two causes. Firstly there is only so much information that can be conveyed by an advertisement, and recruiters may omit requesting tertiary qualifications because it can be assumed as a given on most CV's requested. This is supported by Cleland, Pajo & Toulson (2000) that show HRM practitioners are seeking qualifications with 82% of respondents having completed some form of tertiary education. Alternatively, the omission may reflect a culture of experience over credentials and really indicates what employers' see as important. This is supported by Kaeter (1995) and Hunt & Boxall (1998) who suggest that the essential skills required by HRM practitioner's can really only be learned on the job with practitioners ideally having line management experience or experience outside of HRM. This reinforces the earlier point that those who work in HRM are perceived to be more desirable having not come directly into the area of HRM. The result of this may be some confusion for graduates who wish to go directly into HRM roles through pursuing an HRM degree but are advised to get experience outside of HRM first! There is a clear consensus however, that in the end a tertiary qualified practitioner is preferred to an unqualified practitioner (Human Resources, 2000; Cleland, Pajo & Toulson, 2000; Hunt & Boxall, 1998).

The significance of the present study is that it provides baseline data about HRD practitioners in New Zealand. The present study clearly supports what many practitioners believe intuitively. Firstly, the number of job advertisements for HRD as a proportion of total HRM positions suggests HRD is a more significant component of HRM than is currently acknowledged. Secondly, HRD practitioners in New Zealand are primarily generalists who must be able to turn their hand to a variety of roles, which is contrary to popular prescriptive HRD models, which emphasise specialisation. Thirdly, by way of

omission, HRD positions advertised through newspapers are for experienced practitioners where their experience appears to count for more than their qualifications. Finally, HRD job advertising sends a clear message to HRD graduates that newspapers are not where they should be looking for their opportunities in HRD. The dearth of entry-level HRD positions reinforces the view that graduates may need to look to operational roles before trying to enter HRD.

Future research will need to deal with the phenomenon of internet job advertising that has grown since 1996 when the present data was collected. Further issues that could be addressed are the career paths of recent HRD practitioners to see whether they have gained operational experience perceived by many commentators as being so important to their strategic effectiveness. Finally it would be useful to explore the level of specialisation of New Zealand HRD practitioners as the Australian experience suggests that their maturing 'profession' does encourage specialisation.

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