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### Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)

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Version: Full Version

**Citation: Eagleson, Adrian William (2023) Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). [Thesis] (Unpublished)**

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*Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a  
post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the  
Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

*Adrian Eagleson*

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Organizational Psychology,  
School of Business, Economics, and Informatics, Birkbeck, University of  
London.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that all work presented represents the author's own work

Adrian Eagleson

## **Abstract**

The post-crisis context provides organisations with an opportunity to learn from the weaknesses of previous structures and processes. Previous research on HRD value has been applied mostly to ‘steady state’ business environments and is limited in understanding how HRD value is impacted by crises and how HRD operates within the unique dynamic environments created by crisis. Crises are known to extend over time, requiring different crisis management objectives for an organisation to successfully emerge from a crisis event. Whilst HRD and crisis management scholars share similar concerns and areas of inquiry when considering organisational behaviour, there is a lack of research that explains the specific HRD practices and roles that deliver HRD value and how HRD might need to adopt a more dynamic approach in a post-crisis context.

The study adopts a grounded approach and draws upon qualitative research data drawn from semi-structured interviews with 50 key stakeholders from 23 UK and Irish Banks. Further data was collected from a UK Bank consisting of 15 interviews and two focus groups undertaken in 2018/19 several years on from the on-set of the Global Financial Crisis.

The study contributes to academic knowledge by providing a *Dynamic HRD Post-Crisis Theory*. It identifies that there is value in HRD becoming conversant with crisis management models and using that insight to act as a strategic partner within the crisis process. Armed with this knowledge, HRD practices can support organisational objectives at each stage in the crisis journey. HRD value is demonstrated by the HRD function adopting dynamic HRD roles and capabilities that scan environmental changes and leverage these opportunities to deliver value to the organisation.

The findings raise important questions for the need of HRD to understand crisis management practices and extends the use of dynamic capabilities.

## **Acknowledgements**

I have been fortunate to work with several supervisors during my PhD journey and have valued each of their contributions. To Dr Philip Dewe as my initial supervisor, he provided wisdom, energy, and encouragement. I am sorry that illness saw him retire and I trust that he finds my final thesis an interesting read. To Dr Chris Dewberry for stepping in, providing a sounding board as I re-orientated my focus, found a suitable supervisor, and ensured that as a remote student I felt connected to Birkbeck, thank you.

To Dr Martin McCracken and Dr Rebecca Whiting, I have found a perfect combination of skills and experience. Both have been generous in their time, and I have a new appreciation of the demands a PhD places on supervisors. Martin has helped bring clarity to my research area, encouraging focus and asking the ‘so what’ questions in a supportive way. Rebecca has gone above and beyond as a second supervisor, providing helpful feedback throughout and as the PhD programme director, making sure that I have felt part of the PhD community. Thank you both.

I also thank the Department of Organizational Psychology at Birkbeck. The experience I had as a MSc student was a major factor in wanting to pursue further studies. The department provides a supportive environment for PhD students, and I feel proud to be part of Birkbeck. Thanks to my fellow doctoral students at Birkbeck who have provided support and encouragement along the way, it’s amazing how a simple text or call can make a difference.

To the participants who took part, thank you for your openness, honesty, and feedback. It was a privilege to listen to your experiences of how you dealt with a crisis. To those within the case study organisation who facilitated my research, thank you. I can't name anyone for risk of confidentiality, but you know who you are.

Thanks to my former business partner Johnny for his support and encouragement in embarking on a PhD. To my old school mates who 30+ years later still show interest in what I am doing whilst out on our Friday morning walks. To Mark, Ed, Charles, Peter, and Stephen for always checking in, thanks.

Finally, a special thanks to my family. To my Mum for instilling the importance of education. I'm sorry she hasn't seen me at the finish line. To my wife Jenny for her patience as I have disappeared to the study 'again'. To my two boys, Jonny and Josh, I hope as you have watched me progress through my PhD journey that I have modelled out the value of perseverance, curiosity and a life-long pursuit of knowledge.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Lists of Figures</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1 Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>1.1 Positioning the research, the global financial crisis</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>1.2 Rationale for the study</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>1.3 What we currently know about HRD value and crisis management</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>1.4 How does the thesis respond to the research problem?</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>1.5 Research question and research design</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>1.6 Origins of the study</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>1.7 Thesis structure</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>1.8 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>2 Chapter 2 A review of the literature</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>2.1 Chapter structure</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>2.2 Crisis management: overview and definition</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>2.3 HRD: overview and definition</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>2.4 Common areas of interest between HRD and crisis management</b> .....	<b>40</b>
2.4.1 Methodological challenges when researching HRD and crisis management .....	41
<b>2.5 HRD value: overview</b> .....	<b>43</b>
2.5.1 Learning and the individual.....	44
2.5.2 Individual to organisational learning and performance.....	44
2.5.3 Diversification of scope and range of HRD .....	46
2.5.4 Defining and developing dynamic capabilities .....	48
2.5.5 Dynamic capabilities and HRD.....	49
2.5.6 HRD value and stakeholder perceptions .....	50
2.5.7 Summary: HRD value .....	52
<b>2.6 HRD as an environmentally integrated strategic partner</b> .....	<b>54</b>
2.6.1 The SHRD maturity framework (Mistakis, 2017) .....	54
2.6.2 The dynamic SHRD capabilities framework (Garavan et al., 2016) .....	61
2.6.3 Integrating the SHRD maturity (Mitsakis, 2017) and DSHRDC (Garavan et al.; 2016) frameworks .....	67
<b>2.7 The HRD and crisis management literature: overview</b> .....	<b>69</b>
2.7.1 Adopting an event-based sequence approach to crisis within the study .....	69
2.7.2 Event-based sequence models: overview .....	71
2.7.3 Mitroff, (2005) Crisis Management Model.....	72
2.7.4 Metaphors as a lens to describe HRDs value in crisis.....	74

2.7.5	HRD roles within the Mitroff (2005) CM model.....	77
2.7.6	HRD roles in the containment stage.....	82
2.7.7	HRD roles in the recovery Stage.....	85
2.7.8	HRD roles in the renewal Stage.....	89
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Chapter 3 Research methods.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Research approach: ontological and epistemological considerations.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Grounded theory as relevant to the study.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Rationale for adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach.....</b>	<b>102</b>
3.3.1	Epistemological differences between classic and constructivist approaches.....	103
3.3.2	Research process and product.....	104
3.3.3	Role of the researcher.....	104
3.3.4	Role of literature.....	105
3.3.5	Interview techniques.....	105
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Research design.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Research data: phase 1.....</b>	<b>109</b>
3.5.1	Sample.....	109
3.5.2	Phase 1: initial sampling.....	111
3.5.3	Sampling.....	112
3.5.4	Summary of participants.....	114
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Research data phase 2: BankCo case study.....</b>	<b>116</b>
3.6.1	Case selection.....	117
3.6.2	Participant selection and research process.....	118
<b>3.7</b>	<b>Difficulties encountered during data collection.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>3.8</b>	<b>Summary: research design (phase 1 and 2).....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>3.9</b>	<b>Data generation.....</b>	<b>123</b>
3.9.1	Theoretical saturation.....	126
<b>3.10</b>	<b>Data analysis.....</b>	<b>128</b>
3.10.1	Memos.....	129
3.10.1.1	Operational memos.....	130
3.10.1.2	Reflective memos.....	131
3.10.1.3	Theoretical memos.....	133
3.10.2	Initial coding.....	136
3.10.3	Focused coding.....	138
3.10.4	Theoretical coding.....	140
<b>3.11</b>	<b>Ethical considerations.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>3.12</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Chapter 4 Phase 1 findings.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Chapter structure.....</b>	<b>145</b>



<b>4.2</b>	<b>Macro environment: regulatory landscape.....</b>	<b>148</b>
4.2.1	Regulatory landscape: senior leaders' perspective.....	148
4.2.2	Regulatory landscape: HR/D perspective .....	152
4.2.3	Summary: regulatory landscape .....	155
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Micro environment [1]: HRD investment .....</b>	<b>156</b>
4.3.1	HRD investment: senior leaders' perspective .....	156
4.3.2	HRD investment: HR/D perspective .....	159
4.3.3	Summary: HRD investment .....	163
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Chapter 5 Phase 1 findings: crisis stages and dynamic HRD roles .....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Containment stage: overview .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: overview.....</b>	<b>169</b>
5.2.1	Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: senior leaders' perspective .....	170
5.2.2	Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: HR/D perspective .....	172
5.2.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [1]: HRD Voice .....	176
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: overview .....</b>	<b>177</b>
5.3.1	Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: senior leaders' perspective .....	177
5.3.2	Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: HR/D perspective .....	179
5.3.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer.....	181
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: overview .....</b>	<b>181</b>
5.4.1	Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: senior leaders' perspective.....	182
5.4.2	Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: HR/D perspective.....	183
5.4.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur.....	185
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Summary: Containment Stage HRD roles .....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>Recovery Stage: overview .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: overview.....</b>	<b>188</b>
5.7.1	Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: senior leaders' perspective .....	188
5.7.2	Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: HR/D perspective .....	191
5.7.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent .....	192
<b>5.8</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man: overview .....</b>	<b>193</b>
5.8.1	Dynamic HRD Role [5] Renaissance Man: senior leaders' perspective.....	193
5.8.2	Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man: HR/D perspective .....	195
5.8.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man .....	197
<b>5.9</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: overview .....</b>	<b>197</b>
5.9.1	Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: senior leaders' perspective .....	197
5.9.2	Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: HR/D perspective .....	200
5.9.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer .....	202
<b>5.10</b>	<b>Summary: Recovery Stage HRD roles.....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>5.11</b>	<b>Renewal stage: overview .....</b>	<b>204</b>

<b>5.12</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: overview</b> .....	<b>205</b>
5.12.1	Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: senior leaders' perspective .....	205
5.12.2	Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: HR/D perspective .....	207
5.12.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder .....	209
<b>5.13</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: overview</b> .....	<b>209</b>
5.13.1	Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: senior leaders' perspective .....	210
5.13.2	Dynamic HRD Role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: HR/D perspective.....	212
5.13.3	Summary: Dynamic HRD Role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer.....	214
<b>5.14</b>	<b>Summary: Renewal Stage HRD roles</b> .....	<b>214</b>
<b>5.15</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>215</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Chapter 6 BankCo case study findings</b> .....	<b>219</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Chapter structure</b> .....	<b>222</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Macro environment: regulatory landscape</b> .....	<b>223</b>
6.2.1	HRD's lack of business understanding impacting strategic input into regulatory issues .	224
6.2.2	Mandatory learning: the double-edged sword.....	226
6.2.3	Coaching as a support in dealing with regulatory demands.....	227
6.2.4	Summary: macro environment: regulatory landscape.....	228
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Micro environment [1]: HRD investment</b> .....	<b>228</b>
6.3.1	HRD value attributed to securing budget.....	229
6.3.2	Motivation for HRD investment .....	230
6.3.3	Business partnering .....	231
6.3.4	Summary: Micro environment [1]: HRD investment .....	231
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Micro environment [2]: crisis stages</b> .....	<b>232</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Containment stage: overview</b> .....	<b>233</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice</b> .....	<b>234</b>
6.6.1	Lack of creditability .....	234
6.6.2	Lack of crisis management understanding .....	236
6.6.3	Exec sponsorship.....	237
6.6.4	Summary dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice .....	238
<b>6.7</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer</b> .....	<b>239</b>
6.7.1	Storytelling .....	240
6.7.2	Emotional support .....	240
6.7.3	Dealing with distressed business units .....	241
6.7.4	Summary dynamic HRD Role [2] Healer .....	242
<b>6.8</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur</b> .....	<b>243</b>
6.8.1	Impact of critical reflection.....	243
6.8.2	Dealing with wink management.....	245
6.8.3	HRD challenge .....	245
6.8.4	Summary dynamic HRD Role [3] Provocateur.....	246
<b>6.9</b>	<b>Recovery Stage: overview</b> .....	<b>246</b>

<b>6.10</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent .....</b>	<b>248</b>
6.10.1	Organisational memory .....	249
6.10.2	Summary dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent .....	250
<b>6.11</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man.....</b>	<b>250</b>
6.11.1	Organisational purpose as a means for rebuilding engagement.....	250
6.11.2	Integration into HRD/HRM practices .....	252
6.11.3	Summary dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man .....	253
<b>6.12</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer .....</b>	<b>253</b>
6.12.1	Firm knowledge.....	253
6.12.2	Centralisation of HRD and partnership with HRM.....	255
6.12.3	Summary dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer .....	256
<b>6.13</b>	<b>Renewal Stage .....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>6.14</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder .....</b>	<b>257</b>
6.14.1	Dynamic capabilities leading to ‘outside in’ .....	257
6.14.2	HRD adopting crisis management practices to build effective scanning capabilities within the HRD function.....	258
6.14.3	Summary dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder .....	260
<b>6.15</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer .....</b>	<b>260</b>
6.15.1	Coaching.....	260
6.15.2	Decision making toolkits.....	261
6.15.3	Building for the future.....	261
6.15.4	Summary Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer .....	262
<b>6.16</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Chapter 7: The ‘dynamic HRD post-crisis’ theory .....</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Development and presentation of the constructed theory .....</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Macro environment: regulatory landscape.....</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Micro environment: HRD investment .....</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Micro environment: crisis stages.....</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD roles.....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Theory development: macro environment - regulatory landscape.....</b>	<b>274</b>
7.6.1	Theory development: micro environments .....	275
7.6.2	Theory development: micro environment - HRD investment.....	276
7.6.3	Theory development: micro environment - crisis stages .....	278
7.6.4	Summary: theory development - environmental categories.....	280
<b>7.7</b>	<b>Theory development process associated with dynamic HRD roles: overview..</b>	<b>281</b>
7.7.1	Mapping dynamic roles to crisis stages.....	282
7.7.2	Watkins (1989) five HRD role metaphors .....	283
7.7.2.1	Problem solver to problem finder .....	284
7.7.2.2	Change agent .....	285
7.7.2.3	Empowerer/meaning-maker to provocateur .....	286

7.7.2.4	Organisational designer .....	287
7.7.2.5	Human capital developer to dynamic capability developer.....	287
7.7.2.6	Summary: modifying Watkin's (1989) five HRD metaphors .....	288
<b>7.8</b>	<b>MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018)).....</b>	<b>289</b>
7.8.1	Healer .....	289
7.8.2	Renaissance man .....	290
7.8.3	Summary: MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). .....	291
<b>7.9</b>	<b>Theory development of HRD Voice .....</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>7.10</b>	<b>Chapter summary.....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Chapter 8 Discussion of theoretical contributions .....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Summary of the findings.....</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Identifying that HRD value is impacted by understanding its role in crisis management .....</b>	<b>298</b>
8.2.1	Impact on HRD value when crisis management knowledge is lacking .....	299
8.2.2	Crisis management as a discipline not understood by HRD .....	300
8.2.3	Crisis management consequences when HRD operates in a training provider role.....	302
8.2.4	Summary: Identifying that HRD value is impacted by understanding its role in crisis management.....	303
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Providing new empirical evidence on HRD practices that support organisational crisis management goals.....</b>	<b>304</b>
8.3.1	Environmentally integrated HRD practices .....	305
8.3.2	Public enquiries .....	307
8.3.3	Articulation of organisational purpose.....	308
8.3.4	Summary: Providing new empirical evidence on HRD practices that support organisational crisis management goals.....	308
<b>8.4</b>	<b>HRD value was delivered by HRD practitioners adopting dynamic roles and capabilities that scanned environmental changes and leveraged these opportunities to deliver value for the organisation.....</b>	<b>309</b>
8.4.1	Dynamic capabilities.....	310
8.4.2	Developing dynamic capabilities within the HRD function .....	310
8.4.3	HRD value is demonstrated when HRD develop and deliver initiatives that develop DCs within the wider organisation .....	311
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD roles.....</b>	<b>312</b>
8.5.1	Extending Watkins (1989) HRD metaphors to crisis management .....	312
8.5.2	Dynamic HRD role: Change agent.....	313
8.5.2.1	Unlearning .....	313
8.5.2.2	Organisational memory .....	314
8.5.2.3	Change agent enabled by HRD Investment.....	315
8.5.3	Dynamic HRD Role: Provocateur.....	315
8.5.3.1	Bypassing barriers to learning .....	316
8.5.3.2	Crisis as an enabler for HRD challenge.....	316
8.5.4	Dynamic HRD Role: Organisational Designer .....	317

8.5.4.1	HRD firm experience of pre-crisis structures .....	317
8.5.4.2	HRD strategic partnership with HRM practices .....	319
8.5.5	Dynamic HRD Role: Problem Finder .....	320
8.5.5.1	Maturity of dynamic capabilities .....	321
8.5.6	Dynamic HRD Role: Dynamic Capability Developer .....	322
8.5.6.1	Sensemaking .....	322
8.5.6.2	Learning in Crisis (LiC) .....	323
8.5.7	Contribution to Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man (MHR) Framework.....	324
8.5.7.1	Dynamic HRD Role: Healer.....	324
8.5.7.2	Re-establishment of trust .....	324
8.5.7.3	Developing engagement through storytelling.....	325
8.5.7.4	Supporting emotional and psychological impact.....	325
8.5.7.5	Dynamic HRD Role: Renaissance Man .....	326
8.5.7.6	Ability to influence culture.....	326
8.5.8	Dynamic HRD Role: HRD Voice .....	327
8.5.8.1	Rebuilding stakeholder relationships.....	328
8.5.8.2	Developing absorptive capacity and knowledge integration .....	329
8.5.9	Summary: Dynamic HRD roles .....	330
<b>8.6</b>	<b>Conclusion of theoretical contributions.....</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Chapter 9 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Implications for research .....</b>	<b>334</b>
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Implications for research .....</b>	<b>338</b>
<b>9.3</b>	<b>Methodological strengths and limitations .....</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>9.4</b>	<b>Personal reflection .....</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>9.5</b>	<b>Final conclusion .....</b>	<b>347</b>
	<b>References .....</b>	<b>352</b>
	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>371</b>
	<b>Appendix A Information sheet for interviews (phase 1).....</b>	<b>371</b>
	<b>Appendix B Consent form for interviews (phase 1).....</b>	<b>373</b>
	<b>Appendix C Sample interview guide for phase 1 .....</b>	<b>375</b>
	<b>Appendix D Information sheet for interviews (phase 2).....</b>	<b>376</b>
	<b>Appendix E Consent form for interviews (phase 2).....</b>	<b>378</b>
	<b>Appendix F Sample interview guide for phase 2.....</b>	<b>380</b>
	<b>Appendix G Information sheet for focus groups (phase 2) .....</b>	<b>381</b>
	<b>Appendix H Consent form for focus groups (phase 2) .....</b>	<b>383</b>
	<b>Appendix I Topic guide focus groups (phase 2) .....</b>	<b>385</b>
	<b>Appendix J Interview preparation questions .....</b>	<b>386</b>
	<b>Appendix K Early mapping of categories against literature .....</b>	<b>387</b>

**Appendix L Focus Group pairs exercise example.....387**

## List of Tables

Table 2.1 Mapping Mitsakis (2017) SHRD Maturity and Garavan et al., (2016) DSHRDC's .....	67
Table 2.2 Mapping Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) HRD roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages.....	78
Table 2.3 Mapping Hutchins and Wang (2008) HRD roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages.....	80
Table 2.4 Mapping Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018; Hutchins and Wang (2008); HRD/CM roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages .....	81
Table 3.1 Research methods and data sources .....	107
Table 3.2 Selection criteria for phase 1 interviewees .....	111
Table 3.3 Phase 1 external learning partner consultancy participants.....	114
Table 3.4 Phase 1 HR/D participants .....	115
Table 3.5 Phase 1 senior leader participants .....	116
Table 3.6 Selection criteria for phase 2 interviewees .....	118
Table 3.7 Phase 2 senior leader participants .....	120
Table 3.8 Phase 2 HR/D participants .....	120
Table 3.9 Phase 2 focus group participants .....	121
Table 3.10 Telephone interview strategies (Charmaz, 2014) .....	125
Table 3.11 Operational memos .....	131
Table 3.12 Line by line coding .....	137
Table 3.13 Initial and focused coding leading to abstract categories .....	139
Table 4.1 Core categories mapped to themes .....	145
Table 4.2 Crisis stages mapping dynamic HRD roles .....	147
Table 4.5 Mixed perceptions of HRD value in response to Regulatory landscape and HRD investment.....	165
Table 5.1 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the containment stage .....	186
Table 5.2 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the recovery stage.....	203
Table 5.3 Shared perceptions of HRD roles in the renewal stage.....	214
Table 5.4 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the post-crisis stages.....	217
Table 6.1 Mapping phase 1 and BankCo findings .....	220
Table 6.2 Core categories mapped to themes (b) .....	223
Table 6.3 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles post-crisis (BankCo).....	265
Table 7.1 HRD value in macro environment: regulatory landscape.....	274
Table 7.2 HRD value in micro environment: HRD investment.....	277
Table 7.3 Crisis stages, characteristics and HRD value add practices.....	278
Table 7.4 Mapping dynamic HRD roles.....	282

<b>Table 7.5 Adaption of Watkins (1989) metaphors to dynamic HRD roles .....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>Table 8.1 Crisis stages, organisational goals, HRD practices and HRD roles .....</b>	<b>298</b>

## **Lists of Figures**

Figure 2-1 Mitsakis, 2017 modified framework of SHRD maturity.....	55
Figure 2-2 Dynamic SHRD capabilities: an integrative framework. Garavan et al., (2016) .....	62
Figure 2-3 Mitroff and Pearson, 1993; Mitroff, 2005 crisis management model .....	72
Figure 3-1 Process of data collection and analysis .....	128
Figure 3-2 Early conceptualisation of HRD value in post crisis theory model .....	141
Figure 4-1 Micro environments: crisis stages .....	146
Figure 5-1 Crisis stages and associated dynamic HRD roles.....	167
Figure 5-2 Containment stage and associated dynamic HRD roles.....	169
Figure 5-3 Recovery Stage and associated dynamic HRD roles.....	188
Figure 5-4 Renewal Stage and associated dynamic HRD roles.....	205
Figure 7-1 Dynamic HRD post-crisis theory .....	269



# 1 Chapter 1 Introduction

Extreme events such as the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 and the recent COVID pandemic raise questions as to how HRD demonstrates its value in a crisis context. A concern for HRD academics and practitioners is that if HRD has struggled to demonstrate value in times of relative stability, how can it position itself as a strategic partner in turbulent and dynamic contexts that are created by a crisis (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). This thesis addresses this question through a qualitative grounded theory study that describes how organisational stakeholders explain HRD value once a crisis has occurred (the post-crisis period) within a specific context (the UK and Irish Banking sector). Crises are known to extend over time, requiring different crisis management (CM) objectives for an organisation to successfully emerge from a crisis event (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Mitroff, 2005). This may result in stakeholders having different requirements of HRD in their organisations compared to more ‘steady state’ contexts.

The thesis makes theoretical, empirical as well as methodological contributions to knowledge, with implications for HRD practice. Foremost, the study provides a robust theoretical model that extends our knowledge and understanding of HRD value within a specific context and addresses the call for empirically based studies that explain the nature of the HRD value proposition in dynamic contexts (Garavan et al., 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). Regarding practical implications, the empirical findings identify the need for CM knowledge to become more widely understood within the HRD community. In doing so, practitioners will be able to demonstrate technical and professional knowledge that can build trust and credibility with stakeholders (Aldrich et al., 2015; Gubbins et al., 2018). The methodological approach adopted in using

constructivist grounded theory strengthens the application of grounded theory to HRD research (Devadas, Silong and Ismail, 2011).

To orientate the reader to terms used in the thesis, several definitions are provided below. Throughout this thesis I define 'crisis' as a:

*“Sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organisation's operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat” (Coombs, 2007, p. 39).*

As a definition of crisis, Coomb's (2007) version is helpful in the context of this study based on three considerations. Firstly, it is well documented that the GFC caught the industry unaware (Hindmoor and McConnell, 2013; Martin and Gollan, 2012), secondly, the unexpected nature of the GFC resulted in many institutions being ill-equipped to deal with the long-lasting effects of the crisis from a financial perspective along with damage to the industry in terms of lack of trust from customers and employees (Reputation Institute, 2011) and thirdly, it reflects how participants in the study explained the crisis. In chapter 8, I provide an updated definition of crisis based on the empirical evidence generated in this study.

Throughout the thesis I define HRD as:

*“The creation of a learning culture, within which a range of training, development and learning strategies both respond to corporate strategy and also help shape and influence it” (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a).*

This definition acknowledges the breadth of HRD practices that were described in this study by participants along with HRDs strategic intent of shaping and influencing corporate strategy in a crisis context (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009)

CM is discussed in this study in relation to the planned set of practices that attempt to manage an organisation through a crisis sequence of events from pre, during and post crisis (Mitroff, 2005; James and Wooten, 2010). HRD is discussed in relation to the development of knowledge, skills and capabilities that support CM objectives (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009).

In this introduction chapter I will next position the context of the study (the GFC), followed by setting out the rationale for the thesis in more detail, highlighting its key aims and identifying the research question. I then position myself as the researcher sharing how the origins of this research were rooted in my organisational consulting role within the banking industry. Finally, a short overview of the thesis structure is provided.

### **1.1 Positioning the research, the global financial crisis**

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that resulted from the failure of the western banking system and the ‘house of cards’ effect that was witnessed throughout the world (Cohan, 2009) had a significant impact on the UK and Irish Banking sector (Honohan et al., 2010; House of Commons Treasury Committee, 2009). Several institutions collapsed, with others requiring on-going government aid to continue operating. Financial products and practices that were once assumed to be sustainable sources of economic growth and prosperity swiftly became de-legitimized, regarded instead as ‘questionable practices’ (Johnson and Kwak, 2011, p.197) and ‘bogus’ sources of growth (McDonald and Robinson, 2009, p.256). Highly respected individuals and institutions (bankers, regulators) suddenly became widely detested (Whittle and Mueller, 2012) with a

resulting decline on reputations with the general public (Reputation Institute, 2011). This decline was driven by public perceptions of poor corporate governance and ethics, ineffective human resources management/development (HRM/HRD) practices and leadership failings (Cooper 2009; MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2014; Martin and Gollan, 2012). In the UK and Ireland, official government enquiries from the UK House of Commons Treasury Committee, the UK Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Central Bank of Ireland frequently made the headlines. The term '*banker bashing*' became a feature in the popular press and investigative journalists with documentaries such as the BBC (2011), *RBS: Inside the Bank That Ran Out of Money*, and evocative book titles such as '*Hubris: How HBOS wrecked the best bank in Britain*' (Perman and Darling, 2013) creating a negative view of bankers.

A characteristic of the GFC was the long tail regarding the number of years that it took for the sector and specific banking institutions to contain the crisis, recover, and move forward (International Monetary Fund, Working Paper, 2019). For senior management, changes in the external business environment coupled with a requirement from the respective regulators to deliver cultural change created specific crisis management objectives (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013).

Much of the HRD value debate has been conducted in academia and within the context of organisational stability rather than in the turbulent and dynamic contexts that are created by a crisis (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). The unique context of the GFC therefore allowed me to investigate the value of HRD as perceived by organisational stakeholders and HR/D professionals within the banking sector that had not only created

the conditions for the GFC to occur but continued to experience on-going disruption to its organisational practices for several years following the initial event.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

The study draws together two topics of interest to Organisational Studies (OS) scholars; CM and HRD. According to Hutchins and Wang (2008), the academic disciplines of organisational CM and HRD share similar concerns and areas of inquiry when considering organisational behaviour. CM concerns itself with exploring issues related to social/technical systems along with the economic and psychological impact on organisational effectiveness during the crisis process (Bundy et al., 2017; Mitroff and Pearson 1993; Mitroff, 2005; Pearson and Clair 1998; Pearson and Mitroff, 2019). CM and HRD scholars also engage in research rooted in shared theoretical perspectives, notably critical, human capital/economic, psychological, and strategic/systems thinking (Bundy et al., 2017; Shrivastava, 1993).

However, despite the common areas of interest, there remains a gap in our understanding of the role that HRD plays in helping organisations plan for, handle, and recover from crises (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). And whether the practices that HRD delivers meet the requirements of organisational stakeholders within a specific context (Garavan et al., 2019) such as post-crisis. There is a lack of empirical research that includes how HR/D practitioners view their value within a crisis context, with studies limited to ‘steady state contexts’ such as that conducted by Bates and Chen (2005). Their work showed that HRD practitioners valued performance-based outcomes above developing socially responsible organisations and creating meaningful work contexts and raises important

questions as to what outcomes HRD practitioners value following a crisis. In determining if HRD value in a post-crisis context is worth exploring, three areas were considered: the HRD value literature, the HRD/CM literature and the HRD stakeholder perception literature. In addition to the above, my own experiences as an organisational consultant who worked with a significant number of banks during the post-GFC period has a bearing on the motivation to embark on the study and will be discussed more fully in section 1.6. A fuller review and discussion of the relevant literature is discussed in chapter 2, however at this point it is useful to briefly highlight the rationale that justified undertaking the demands of a PhD to examine the area of interest.

### **1.3 What we currently know about HRD value and crisis management**

The wider HR value proposition debate developed in the early 2000's with scholars and practitioners, placing an emphasis on HR operating as strategic business partners and making people a value-added resource within organisations (Ulrich and Brockbank 2005; Wright and Snell 2005). The basic premise of these authors' work is that stakeholders who receive HR related services should gain value from them, and that value is defined by the receiver more than the giver. In developing a HR value proposition model, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) identified five elements that characterise HR value added contributions: (1) understanding external business realities, (2) serving the needs of internal and external stakeholders, (3) crafting HR practices, (4) building HRs teams and structures and (5) ensuring HR professionalism. Whilst the HR business partner model has been widely adopted within organisations, the nature of HR value continues to be debated by scholars as to its ability to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives in managing all aspects of the employment relationship (Carbery, 2015; Leatherbarrow and Rees, 2017). Similarly, amongst academics the

HRD value proposition continues to be an on-going contested debate (Han et al., 2017; Mitsakis, 2017; Stewart and Rigg, 2011). To this point the literature has looked at whether the focus is on organisational effectiveness (Francis, Holbeche and Reddington, 2012), performance or learning (Lee, 2015), the strategic influence of HRD (Garavan 2007, McCracken and Wallace, 2000a; 2000b, Mitsakis, 2017), and whether the focus should be on individual vs organisational performance (Alagaraja, Cumberland and Choi, 2015). As noted above a further challenge is that most of the literature assumes a steady organisational state or indeed one of organisational growth in which HRD operates within (Garavan et al., 2016). The impact of the GFC created a context where both the external environment in terms of the global capital markets and the internal organisational environments were characterised by extreme turbulence. In seeking to provide an answer to how HRD adds value in dynamic contexts attention has turned to both the strategic nature and maturity of HRD within a post-crisis context (Mitsakis, 2017) and the role that dynamic capabilities can play in supporting HRD to navigate uncertain times (Garavan et al., 2016; Kareem and Mijbas, 2019). However there have been limited empirical studies that help explain HRD value in a post-crisis context.

The evidence from the HRD and CM literature also highlights that our knowledge and understanding concerning HRD value in a crisis context requires further research. A key motivator for undertaking this study was the provocation from Hutchins (2008) in a special edition of *Advances in Development of Human Resources*, 2008. In her editorial, Hutchins asked the question “*What does HRD know about crisis management, not enough, read on!*”. Similarly, in reviewing articles over a 7-year period (2012-2019) in the *Human Resource Development Review*, Wang (2019) notes the tremendous opportunities for HRD to tap into the CM space. Others such as Wang, Hutchins and

Garavan (2009), Wooten and James (2008), Reilly (2008) and Zulkarnaini et al., (2019) have suggested that within each stage of a crisis there are learning and performance opportunities at individual, team, technological and cultural levels. Both Hutchins and Wang, (2008) and Wang, (2008) suggest that crises create a strong change agent role for HRD along with opportunities to operate in several of the HRD roles as defined by Watkins (1989) such as Human Capital Developer, Problem Solver and Organisational Designer. The Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man Model developed by Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) is an HR crisis specific framework that leverages the unique skill set of HR/D practitioners in being able to address the psychological and emotional impacts of a crisis, whilst also being able to help re-shape the organisational purpose and values as organisations look to move into a place of renaissance once recovery has been successfully navigated. Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer (2014) have taken the concept of learning from crisis and developed their 'learning in crisis' (LiC) approach that promotes the practice of learning through rehearsal, review, refining and change of leadership behaviours. LiC advances an emergent orientation that is useful in signal detection within the crisis management models. However, whilst there is a growing body of literature that attempts to address the nature of HRD value in CM, much of it is conceptual rather than empirical and has tended to focus on the role that HRD plays in supporting learning, change and performance outcomes. A contribution of this study is its empirical nature, including the perspectives of HR/D and other stakeholders and considers more broadly the need for HRD practices that are environmentally integrated such as dealing within increased regulation.

A third area of research that determined that HRD value required further investigation was based on the literature concerning the stakeholder perception of HRD following the



GFC. The perceptions held about HRD are a critical factor in the reality of the practice of HRD with a challenge that the same HRD activity can be viewed differently by various stakeholder groups, creating difficulty in understanding where HRD does and does not deliver stakeholder value (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou 2016, p.70). In their review of 105 articles that examined employee perceptions of HR practices, Wang et al., (2020), identify the ‘What’, the ‘How’ and the ‘Why’ of employee perceptions. The ‘What’ refers to the content of HR practices, the ‘How’ is the framing and positioning of these practices and the ‘Why’ considers how employees judge the motivations that sit behind HR practices. Their findings along with others highlight the gap that exists between employee and managerial perceptions (Jensen et al., 2013; Ostroff and Bowen, 2004; Bowen and Ostroff, 2016) and secondly, that measurement is usually conducted at an individual rather than an organisational level. Both these factors influenced the research design of the study to ensure that both managerial and employee perceptions were captured through the inclusion of a case study organisation as part of the theory-building process. Furthermore, empirical studies from Aldrich et al., (2015); Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2015); along with the work of Mitsakis and Aravopoulou (2016) and Mitsakis (2017) show that the GFC ‘back-footed’ HRD where its influence and value was diminished.

There is general agreement that HRD ought to play a strategic value role in CM and the crisis context, however the specific problem is the discussion has largely taken place at a conceptual level with a lack of empirical evidence to build and test out theoretical models (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011).

Within the literature there is a gap in knowledge and understanding as to what the key stakeholders who experience a crisis perceive to be HRD value.

In addition to the three bodies of literature that I reviewed, the PhD process at Birkbeck was extremely helpful in narrowing my focus. Upon embarking on my PhD journey, as a novice researcher I had a wide area of interest which covered the crisis context and specifically crisis learning/learning transfer, HRD perceptions of causes for the GFC and the value of HRD. A pivot point in my thinking came from the feedback from one of the internal upgrade examiners in bringing focus to my study. Their feedback stated

*“HRD practitioners tend to think they can punch above their weight and overestimate their own influence and position - a more critical lens would be real 'value add' to 'the ongoing debates within HRD on its legitimacy and value in a post-crisis context' (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). This would be a really interesting contribution”.*

In conjunction with my own research this helped bring clarity to the research problem that could be successfully achieved within the constraints of a time bound PhD study.

#### **1.4 How does the thesis respond to the research problem?**

Based on the understanding of the research problem, the aim of this qualitative grounded theory study was to develop a theory based on stakeholder perception of HRD value in a post-crisis context, leading to a dynamic HRD theory that could be applied in organisational contexts. The study included stakeholders within the UK and Irish Banking sector including HR/D practitioners who had experienced the GFC within their individual organisation and would be able to describe the role that HRD had played throughout the crisis sequence. External learning partners were also engaged in the study as a particular set of stakeholders who provided specialist expertise to organisations in the immediate aftermath of the initial GFC. One case study organisation was used to ensure that ‘thick descriptions’ of HRD value were developed

in the final substantive theory. The study used a constructivist approach to grounded theory, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Gaining perspectives from key stakeholders who experienced the GFC provides insights into the specifics of HRD value at each stage within the crisis sequence. In constructivism, experiences of multiple people are explored according to his or her own reality, and then interwoven to construct theory from the data (Charmaz, 2006). The constructivist approach also recognises the role that the researcher plays in the active development of theory. As a practitioner within the HRD field, taking on a reflexive approach allowed my own position to be acknowledged throughout the theory development process and will be more fully explained in chapter 3. Within this study I hold onto a constructivist-interpretive ontology (i.e. that the post-crisis context and associated crisis stages are phenomena that are constructed by individuals' experiences of crisis, Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; Bundy et al., 2017), whilst also recognising a subjectivist epistemology (that perceptions of HRD value are largely subjectively and socially constructed, Alagaraja, 2013).

## **1.5 Research question and research design**

Research questions for grounded theory should “reflect a problem-centred perspective of those experiencing a phenomenon and be sufficiently broad to allow for the flexible nature of the research method” (Birks and Mills, 2011, p. 21). In getting to the place where I was comfortable with my research question, I found the work of Charmaz (2006, 2014) on constructivist grounded theory (CGT) helpful in understanding that CGT research questions focus on explaining social processes. CGT research questions are useful in explaining a particular phenomenon (here, HRD value), in the context (the UK and Irish Banking sector, post-GFC) of those that experience it (organisational stakeholders including HR/D practitioners themselves).

The research question for this study was:

RQ 1: *“How do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish Banking sector”*

Grounded theory methodology is a strong way to build theories because the analysis is grounded in the data (Birks and Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Urquhart, 2012). Grounded theory is the most widely used and popular qualitative research methodology across a wide range of disciplines and subject areas (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Kenealy, 2012). This study sought to generate a theory of HRD value, possibly depicted as a model, using the constructivist approach to apply grounded theory to what stakeholders perceive to be HRD value practices in a post-crisis context. Grounded theory also assumes that individuals can have differing perceptions of what constitutes HRD value based on their lived experience of the phenomena of the post-crisis period. Crises are known to create strong psychological and emotional responses and grounded theory provides an appropriate framework for individuals experiences to be captured and then developed into core categories to support a final theory. The theory for this study was developed from the start of data collection, and I refined interviewing and sampling to ensure that an appropriate sample was selected.

The study sample was drawn from a population of senior HRD practitioners, senior HR practitioners, external learning providers, senior leaders including those operating at C-Suite level, middle management, and front-line staff. All the participants had been part of the UK and Irish banking sector since the GFC. Grounded theory methodology calls for the researcher to acknowledge when data saturation has occurred, or when there are

no new emerging concepts or categories coming from the interview data (Birks and Mills, 2011; Urquhart, 2012). For the purposes of this study, I anticipated a sample between 12 and 20 HR/D and external learning participants, 10-15 senior leader participants and several focus groups within a case study organisation. The final sample was made up of 30 HR/D and external learning participants, 20 senior leaders, two focus groups within a single case study organisation comprising of 17 middle managers and front-line staff and a further 15 interviews within the same case study. More details about the specific design of the study and the ethical protocols that were adopted in the study are provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 Origins of the study**

The origins for the study came from my experience as an organisational consultant working with a significant number of the UK and Irish Banks from 2009-2018. At the time of the GFC, the consultancy I was a partner in was heavily engaged in developing thought leadership articles on the topic of ‘crisis incubation’ (Turner, 1994) in association with several CM consultancies and one academic institution who wished to develop a MSc in Organisational Resilience. I was also involved in a partnership with another academic institution working with their psychology department in developing an online assessment tool of crisis behaviours ([www.canarytest.com](http://www.canarytest.com)) that was used in my consultancy role. The theoretical framework that I adopted at that time (and still hold onto) is that organisational crises typically result due to a breakdown in socio-technical issues (Mitroff, 2005; Turner, 1994) with a view that crises develop over time with various weak signals that are often over-looked by management. The breakdown in managerial decision making in the pre-crisis era is well documented (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2014; Zagelmeyer and Gollan, 2012) and my thinking and approach was timely in providing a framework to understand the GFC. As a result, we

(I) found ourselves in demand with leadership teams within UK and Irish Banks who wished to make sense of what had taken place and required support to build effective CM strategies that would support organisational goals. During these work assignments, I drew on theoretical frameworks of crisis learning developed by Wooten and James (2008) that focused on leadership competencies required at each crisis stage and the work of Smith and Elliott (2007) on navigating barriers to learning post-crisis.

I was fortunate to often work with the CEO, executive team, and relevant HR and HRD teams in the design, delivery and evaluation of HRD initiatives. In adopting a constructivist lens for this study, my decision was shaped by my own experiences of the post-crisis period. I observed how individuals attributed their own meaning to crisis events with some having to grapple with the realisation that they had played a part in creating conditions for the crisis to occur. Others looked for a scapegoat to blame, which often, included HR and by extension HRD on allowing toxic cultures to exist (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2014). I also observed that HRD operates within a complex and compromised context where power imbalances are an organisational reality and the need for HRD to manage the expectations of a variety of stakeholders (Gold and Bratton, 2014; Garavan, 2007; Mitsakis, 2017; Watson and Maxwell, 2007).

During this period, I coached hundreds of senior leaders either in a 1:1 capacity or through team effectiveness sessions, whilst also working with other external learning partners (Business schools, Big 4 consultancies, or smaller specialist consultancy practices) in helping HRD understand the requirements of the organisation and develop integrated HRD policies, plans and processes. Much of this was done against the backdrop of a highly pressurized external environment driven largely by the presence of

the regulator and on-going public scrutiny. Through these experiences, I heard from senior leaders who related on the one hand their frustration at the lack of strategic alignment with HRD, whilst on the other being deeply appreciative of the ability of the function to perform multiple roles often at the same time to deliver against organisational objectives. I also witnessed the effort expended from HRD practitioners to have their voice heard, re-gain credibility and gain a seat at the top table.

Having completed a MSc at Birkbeck, I had enjoyed the academic rigor of the programme and my quantitative dissertation on personal resilience was published in a handbook on Mental Toughness (Clough, Strycharczyk, 2012). This gave me confidence to undertake a PhD. As noted earlier, upon embarking on my PhD journey I was challenged to think about other research approaches that would broaden my skills as a researcher, as well as developing my ontological and epistemological position on my area of interest; the post-crisis period and HRD value. Critical thinking was also applied to my role as researcher in constructing the final theory based on my experiences as a practitioner. This thesis identifies how I adopted a reflexive approach to the study and made extensive use of memos (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) to reflect on my role as a researcher throughout the research process.

Having described the origins of this study, the final section will provide a brief overview of the thesis structure.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

In order to provide an overview of the thesis, a short summary of each chapter is provided below:

### **Chapter 2: A review of the literature**

A review of the key literature about what is known regarding HRD value in a post-crisis context is provided. It highlights that the focus from academics has largely centred on change, learning and performance outcomes. An argument is made that theoretical frameworks that encourage HRD environmental scanning are a more useful approach to apply to the dynamic contexts of crisis. Additionally, using role metaphors which act as rich descriptors of HRD practices required in CM along with an event-based sequential perspective on crisis are examined as a way of explaining the complexity of HRD practices required in a crisis context more easily.

### **Chapter 3: Research methods**

This chapter describes the rationale for the research design. The data generation process is explained, including the selection of the sample groups for phase 1 of the study and the case study organisation for phase 2. Ethical considerations in the data generation process are also discussed. The chapter goes on to explain the grounded theory data analysis process which involved a progression from initial to focused coding and then theoretical coding, demonstrating how within the study, there was a constant interplay between the data and the literature resulting in the development of the final substantive theory of *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*.



#### **Chapter 4: Phase 1 findings: regulatory landscape and HRD investment**

This chapter is the first of three which present the findings from the two phases of the study. Thirteen core categories were identified which were grouped together into three main themes; one macro environment of *Regulatory Landscape*, two micro environments of *HRD Investment* and *Crisis Stages*, and dynamic HRD roles that delivered HRD value within specific crisis stages. To aid the reader, the *Regulatory Landscape* and *HRD Investment* are discussed in this chapter. Views from senior leaders and HR/D practitioners are examined to highlight the points of difference between stakeholder groups on what constituted HRD value.

#### **Chapter 5: Phase 1 findings: crisis stages and associated dynamic HRD roles**

This chapter examines the eight dynamic HRD roles (*HRD Voice, Healer, Provocateur, Change Agent, Renaissance Man, Organisational Designer, Problem Finder, Dynamic Capability Developer*) that were associated with specific crisis stages (*containment, recovery, renewal*) from the different stakeholders' perspectives. The findings show that HRD value was attributed to being able to adopt several roles simultaneously that supported overall organisational goals.

#### **Chapter 6: Case study findings**

This chapter examines the case study (referred to as BankCo for the rest of the thesis) findings. It provides further 'thick descriptors' of themes that were developed from phase 1 and illustrates differences in stakeholder perspectives of HRD value within a single organisation. The BankCo findings provided further understanding on how pre-crisis HRD practices impacted their creditability along with a lack of business understanding and CM principles. It explained the important role of organisational

purpose in allowing the organisation to move forward and the role that HRD practices played in embedding crisis learning.

### **Chapter 7: The ‘dynamic HRD post-crisis theory’**

This chapter provides an overview of the substantive theory (*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*) that was developed from the study and provides a model as a representation of the theory. It explains the theory development process that resulted in the iterative process of engaging with the data and literature which is a feature of grounded theory methods.

### **Chapter 8: Discussion of theoretical contributions**

This chapter uses the theoretical framework presented in chapter 7 to examine and discuss the findings in more detail, describing the contributions that this study makes to the literature on HRD’s role within CM. The findings and subsequent grounded theory developed from this study identify that stakeholders view HRD value in a post-crisis context in three ways. Firstly, there is value in HRD becoming conversant with CM models and using that insight to act as a strategic partner within the crisis process. Secondly, armed with this knowledge, HRD can design, deliver and evaluate HRD interventions that support organisational objectives at each stage in the crisis journey. Lastly, HRD value is demonstrated by the HRD function adopting dynamic HRD roles and capabilities that scan environmental changes and leverage these opportunities to deliver value to the organisation.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

This chapter discusses implications for research and practice. Methodological strengths and weaknesses are identified, along with areas for further research. The conclusion draws together and summarizes the aims of the study, the rationale for the research design, key findings and their originality and value.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have identified how the thesis aims to contribute to the on-going HRD value debate. Locating the study in the context of the post-crisis period can help extend knowledge and understanding more broadly on the role of HRD in dynamic crisis contexts. Adopting a grounded theory approach using a range of organisational stakeholders allows for social processes surrounding HRD value to be explained. The chapter has also identified how the origins of this study were developed from my role as an organisational consultant during the years following the GFC. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure has been provided by outlining a summary of the chapters that now follow.

## **2 Chapter 2 A review of the literature**

In this chapter I present a review of the literature relevant in addressing the research question *“How do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish Banking sector”*.

I will critically reflect on what is currently known in existing theory, knowledge and understanding of HRD value in a post-crisis context and identify gaps that this study addresses. Consistent with a constructivist grounded theory approach, there was a constant interplay between data collection, data analysis and the literature. This ensured that the theory remained ‘grounded in the data’, whilst also providing frameworks to allow for analysis and theory building. Throughout the chapter, examples of how the data helped inform new avenues of literature review and vice versa are shared demonstrating the reflexive nature of the methodological approach taken.

### **2.1 Chapter structure**

The chapter is structured as follows. Given the nature of the study in drawing from the academic fields of HRD and Crisis Management (CM), I will provide a brief overview and definition of each area to orientate the reader. This will be followed by identifying areas of interest between HRD and CM along with several methodological challenges that have resulted in limited empirical research being undertaken in examining HRDs role in CM.

I then review the literature from three perspectives, the HRD value literature, HRD as a strategic environmentally integrated partner and the HRD/CM literature. In reviewing the HRD value literature, I use the work of Han et al., (2017) to identify that since its

inception HRD scholars and practitioners have struggled to consistently demonstrate its value in steady state contexts, never mind the turbulent environments created by a crisis. I position the value of Dynamic Capabilities (Garavan et al., 2016) as a promising area that can support HRD value within a crisis context. In concluding this section, I briefly discuss the HRD stakeholder literature, identifying that stakeholder requirements in a crisis context differ to those in a 'steady state' context and is an area that warrants further investigation (Mitsakis, 2019).

I then discuss and review two dynamic SHRD models that emphasise environmental scanning as a more useful way to examine HRD value and critique the SHRD maturity framework (Mistakis, 2017) and the Dynamic SHRD capabilities framework (Garavan et al., 2016), identifying opportunities for this study to build on these theories and review several empirical studies which have investigated SHRD following the GFC.

In reviewing the HRD/CM literature, I position my rationale for adopting an event-based sequence approach to understanding crisis and why I chose the Mitroff (2005) crisis management model. Various HRD authors have used the event-based sequence approach to develop theories on the role that HRD can play in each crisis stage and the competencies required by leaders. Whilst promising, these contributions have tended to be conceptual with a lack of empirical research that extends knowledge and understanding on what HRD practices add most value and how HRD considers beyond learning, change, and performance interventions to support CM processes (Hutchins and Wang, 2008). I then present research that has used HRD role metaphors as a lens to explain HRD value and the usefulness of metaphors in describing socially constructed phenomena such as crisis and HRD value (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and

Vouzas, 2018). In the final sections, I integrate the Mitroff (2005) CM model and the HRD role metaphor literature identifying specific roles that HRD can adopt to support CM goals in each stage of a crisis.

Having provided an overview of the chapter structure, the next section provides a brief overview and definition of crisis.

## **2.2 Crisis management: overview and definition**

CM is seen to have developed as an area of interest with scholars and practitioners in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the fields of behavioural science and disaster response (Booth, 2015). The area of organisational CM as a formal management discipline did not gain real impetus in the United States until the Tylenol poisoning scandal of 1982, and in Europe after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 (Falkheimer and Heide, 2006). Before this within the UK, Turner (1976) was interested in several man-made disasters (such as the Aberfan mining disaster in Wales and the Hixon Level Crossing Incident) and began developing a model of man-made disasters, based on the assumption that disasters are the result of a combination of socio-technical factors.

CM, as a discipline has presented academics and practitioners with a challenge in terms of the definition and conceptualisation of the term. As an area of study, it intersects with a variety of academic and practitioner disciplines, which has led to what Shrivastava (1993) refers to as a “tower of Babel” effect with little consensus and integration across fields of study, regarding the relevant pre-conditions, processes, and outcomes associated with crises and CM. This has resulted in a lack of frameworks, core concepts or core models (Bundy et al., 2017). Effective definition of the word ‘crisis’ has been a

problem for decades as noted over forty years ago by Holsti (1978) who commented that *‘Crisis is a much-overused term which has become burdened with a wide range of meanings, some of them quite imprecise’* (p. 41). In the introduction chapter (Section 1.0) I provided a definition of crisis that I use to describe crisis throughout the study:

*“A sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organisation’s operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat”* (Coombs, 2007, p. 39).

In addition to defining crisis, the work of Bundy et al (2017., p.1663) is helpful in providing the reader with four primary characteristics of crisis that were also represented in how participants in this study described the GFC: (a) crises are sources of uncertainty, disruption, and change (Bundy and Pfarrer, 2015; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011); (b) crises are harmful or threatening for organisations and their stakeholders, many of whom may have conflicting needs and demands (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011); (c) crises are behavioural phenomena, meaning that the literature has recognised that crises are socially constructed by the actors involved rather than a function of the depersonalised factors of an objective environment (Coombs, 2010; Gephart, 2007; Lampel, Shamsie and Shapira, 2009); and (d) crises are parts of larger processes, rather than discrete events (Pearson and Clair, 1998; Roux-Dufort, 2007). As noted in section 1.0, CM is discussed in this study in relation to the planned set of practices that attempt to manage an organisation through a crisis sequence of events from pre, during and post crisis (Mitroff, 2005; Wooten and James, 2008). Having provided an overview of CM, in the next section I provide a brief overview and definition of HRD.

### 2.3 HRD: overview and definition

Whilst the practice of HRD involving designing learning and leading change is ancient, formalised scholarly study of the discipline is relatively new. Debate ranges on when the actual term HRD was first introduced. Harbinson and Myers (1964) used it within the context of Human Capital Theory. As economists, they saw the economic value at a national level through systemic training and education of employees that would develop knowledge skills and expertise. Leonard Nadler first introduced the term to the American Society of Training and Development in 1969. Since then, there has been multiple definitions and areas of research that have focused on (1) Defining HRD (Hamlin and Stewart, 2011); (2) Identifying core HRD theories such as adult learning (Sleezer, 2004), systems theory (Yawson, 2013), boundaries (McClellan and Lee, 2016), roles of HRD (Watkins, 1989, Lee, 2015), academic programmes (Watkins and Marsick, 2009); (3) the strategic nature of HRD (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a) and (4) the role of evidence based practice within HRD (Gubbins et al., 2018). Similar to CM, HRD academics have not been able to agree on an exact meaning of the term. A search of academic journals returns somewhere in the region of 20-30 different definitions, which can be divided into individual, organisational, societal and multi-level levels of analysis (Carbery, 2015). In section 1.0, I provided a definition of HRD that I use throughout the thesis that adopts an organisational level of analysis due to this study focusing on the academic discipline of organisational studies.

*“HRD is the creation of a learning culture, within which a range of training, development and learning strategies both respond to corporate strategy and also help shape and influence it”* (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a).

Having provided an overview and definitions of both topics of interest in this study, I will now discuss how HRD and CM share common concerns and areas of inquiry regarding organisational behaviour.



## **2.4 Common areas of interest between HRD and crisis management**

In section 1.2, I identified the merit of Organisational Studies (OS) scholars and practitioners examining how the areas of HRD and CM can address the question of HRD value in a post-crisis context. As will be outlined in the sections below, both areas have been researched from a myriad of disciplinary approaches which has led to challenges around conceptualisation of theories and application at a practitioner level (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). Moreover, crisis research appears in a variety of publication outlets, including those focused on communication, leadership, management, strategy, and even niche journals related to CM or crisis communication. Some scholars have argued that this fragmentation has kept crisis research on the periphery of “mainstream” management theory (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; Bundy et al., 2017; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Pearson and Clair, 1998). Crisis are known to be complex, ambiguous and socially constructed and as a result cannot be understood from a single perspective, requiring a plurality of perspectives to help improve management practice (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, p.207). To reconcile this fragmentation of crisis research Bundy et al., (2017) propose that organisational research adopts a cross-disciplinary scholarly approach to studying organisational crises. They suggest that in doing so it could help avoid a silo effect, whereby researchers from different perspectives often talk past one another resulting in little consensus and integration regarding crisis and CM. In this regard, a contribution of this study is that it uses the academic disciplines of CM and HRD to contribute to the literature on HRD value.

The academic disciplines of organisational CM and HRD share similar concerns and areas of inquiry when considering organisational behaviour (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Zulkarnaini et al., 2019). CM concerns itself with exploring issues related to

social/technical systems, economic and psychological impact on organisational effectiveness during the crisis process (Bundy et al., 2017; Mitroff and Pearson 1993; Mitroff, 2005; Pearson and Clair 1998; Pearson and Mitroff, 2019). CM and HRD scholars also engage in research rooted in shared theoretical perspectives, notably critical, human capital/ economic, psychological, and strategic/systems thinking (Bundy et al., 2017; Shrivastava, 1993). For CM practitioners, a focus is to prepare, protect and support the organisation in case of a crisis event; for HRD practitioners, it is to develop the capabilities of people to perform various types of job functions that ultimately leads to organisational effectiveness and sustainability. In addition, a main goal of both practitioner disciplines is the impact of the organisation on the individual, the community, and society (McClean and McClean, 2001; Hamlin and Stewart, 2011).

Having addressed areas of common interest between HRD and CM, in the next section I highlight methodological challenges when researching HRD and CM.

#### **2.4.1 Methodological challenges when researching HRD and crisis management**

Having argued that there is merit on a theoretical and practical level for HRD scholars and practitioners to have a better understanding of its role in CM, a review of the literature shows that there has been limited interest with a lack of empirical studies or the development of empirically based theories. In a special edition of *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, Hutchins (2008) chose to title her editorial “*What does HRD know about Crisis Management? Not enough! Read on.*”. Her summary of the respective worlds of both academic and practitioner disciplines showed that they existed largely independent of each other, with an acknowledgement that no major HRD journal had addressed the topic of CM in significant detail. Whilst at the time of writing this

thesis, there has been greater interest in HRD/CM studies these have typically been conceptual or focused on specific areas within CM such as learning in crisis (Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer, 2014), leadership competencies in crisis (Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, 2017; James and Wooten, 2010) and HRD roles within crisis (Hutchins and Wang, 2008, Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). However there has been no research that has examined HRD practitioners' perceptions and that of other stakeholders of organisational HRD's role and understanding of CM which is a gap this study seeks to address.

A reason for the lack of empirical research could be due to three methodological challenges as noted by Buchanan and Denyer, (2013). They suggest that researchers are met with issues around the lack of agreed definitions or typologies concerning crisis events. Secondly, crisis research is fragmented by a variety of approaches keeping it out of 'mainstream' management theory (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011) and thirdly, researchers have been required to adopt designs and methods considered unconventional in other areas. Several suggestions for how crisis research could be better integrated from a general organisational and management perspective are suggested by Buchanan and Denyer (2013) which have been incorporated into this study. These include using non-traditional methods such as case design (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and applying proxy longitudinal approaches to understand better the crisis process. The position of Buchanan (2012) that it is possible to build theory and generalise from single case studies is adopted in the research design of this study. Eisenhardt and Graebner, (2007) note that by attending to thoughtful research design including case selection and the use of interviews with numerous participants to mitigate against bias, case studies play an important role in management theory

building. The use of a proxy longitudinal approach in the research design involves adopting an event-based sequence perspective on how a crisis unfolds. The event-based sequence perspective is how HRD scholars have attempted to understand HRD's role in CM and is the position I take in this study relating to the stages an organisation goes through when they experience a crisis (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; James and Wooten, 2010; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). These methodological considerations will be expanded on further in section 3.4 but are important to note at this stage in identifying the lack of empirical research relating to HRD/CM resulting in gaps in knowledge and understanding of how HRD can provide value in a post-crisis context.

Thus far in the thesis, I have identified the benefit of HRD understanding its role in CM and considered some of the methodological challenges facing HRD/CM research. In developing an understanding of what we currently know about HRD value, the literature will be reviewed, identifying the challenges that HRD scholars face in clarifying HRDs value proposition.

## **2.5 HRD value: overview**

In this section I identify that one of the most pressing challenges facing HRD within an organisational context is its value proposition with questions remaining as to the extent that HRD contributes to overall organisational success (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou 2016, p69). Given this thesis integrates both CM and HRD, it is useful to provide a brief discussion on HRD value. The work of Han et al., (2017) gives a useful analysis of research topics that have investigated HRD value. They summarise their study as three thematic waves; (1) learning and the individual, (2) individual to organisational learning and performance, (3) diversification of HRD value. Following this discussion, I position

the importance of dynamic capabilities within the HRD value debate (Garavan et al., 2016) and its relevance to the crisis context. In keeping with a grounded theory approach, the theme of DC's developed as a key theme from the data generation and analysis stages. Finally, I identify the impact of stakeholder perceptions on HRD value and discuss the gaps in knowledge and understanding that this study seeks to address in understanding HRD value.

### **2.5.1 Learning and the individual**

Han et al., (2017) identify that the *first wave* of HRD was characterised by struggles and confusion around the establishment of HRD within academia both as a topic and as an area of research along with an over emphasis on learning which centers around the individual. The 1960s and 70's saw HRD defined implicitly by scholars in terms of processes or practices for individual development (Nadler 1970). The 1980's was also seen as a struggle in terms of legitimacy of the identity of HRD (Galagan, 1986). Also, during this period, attention turned towards how HRD applied to individuals working within organisations and the role it might play in organisational goals and performance.

### **2.5.2 Individual to organisational learning and performance**

The *second wave* showed a movement from individual learning to organisational learning. In their review of HRD definitions in the 1990's Hamlin and Stewart (2011) showed that the definition of HRD within the academic literature had shifted away from individual learning and development with the introduction of terms such as *organisational effectiveness* (McLagan, 1989), *organisational learning* (Watkins, 1989) and *organisational development* (Swanson, 1995). Within the methodology chapter (section 3.5.4), the reader will see that each of these terms represented job titles of HRD

participants.

During this *second wave* period, Han et al., (2017) also observed a shift in focus from learning to performance. Proponents of learning emphasize the role of HRD on behavioural change, human potential and personal learning capacity. Terms such as the learning organisation (Senge, 1990) and workplace learning (Marsick, 1988), called for a new paradigm to explore the changing nature of organisations and how culture and organisational structures influence learning. Learning post-crisis is a topic that has been well documented by those from the CM literature (Bundy et al., 2017) but what is not understood is the role of HRD throughout this process (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; James and Wooten, 2010) and as such is a motivator for this research.

Within the performance paradigm, and of interest to this study, is the exploration of the strategic role of HRD and if and how it can act as a strategic partner and key player in organisational strategic planning, specifically in the development and execution of organisational CM goals (Garavan, 2007; McCracken and Wallace, 2000a; Mitsakis, 2017; Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009). Those who align with this paradigm see the output of HRD impacting the performance of individual, group and the whole organisation in alignment with organisational goals (Holton and Swanson, 2011).

Whilst the learning vs performance debate (Garavan, 2007; Lee, 2015) continues within HRD, others such as Hatcher (2010) have attempted to propose a new emphasis on social and ethical benefits, which can serve to bring the discipline back to more of the root disciplines which underpin it. This includes how HRD can support ethical decision-making (Gold and Bratton, 2014) which was a criticism of the pre-crisis culture within banking that HRD was seen to endorse (Hindmoor and McConnell, 2013). In summing

up this *second wave* (Han et al., 2017) suggest it highlights the critical mission of HRD creating a strategically orientated organisational process for developing human capital.

### **2.5.3 Diversification of scope and range of HRD**

Finally, the *third wave* is characterised by attempts to expand the range and scope of HRD. Areas such as Globalisation (McClellan, 2002) and National HRD (Gibb, 2011) focus on macro trends that impact knowledge creation, economic sustainability and competitive advantage. The rise in technology has also changed how HRD is delivered with the advent of web 2.0 encouraging collaboration and innovations on design and delivery models (Cascio, 2014). Other areas within the HRD literature that have evolved in this third wave period are critical HRD (Gold and Bratton, 2014), social capital perspectives (Gubbins and Garavan, 2016), corporate and social responsibility (Jang and Ardichvili, 2020) and how HRD reaches across cross-disciplinary areas that are concerned with knowledge creation and the role of context in shaping HRD (Harney, 2016). Scholars interested in context have drawn on contingency theory that proposes that to demonstrate HRD value, it should be aligned with dimensions of the external and internal environment (Garavan et al., 2019; Harney, 2016). Contingency factors such as strategy, organisational size, life stage of an organisation, industry, geography and cultural differences all play a role in determining HRM and by extension HRD value (Brandl, Ehnert and Bos-Nehles, 2012). Understanding how the crisis context may create a unique set of internal and external environments that HRD needs to respond to is an area of focus in this thesis. Specifically, the need for HRD to develop dynamic capabilities if it is to demonstrate value in turbulent contexts (Garavan et al., 2016; Kareem and Mijbas, 2019). The interest in how HRD can help develop dynamic

capabilities (DCs) provides a helpful framework for demonstrating HRD value within the turbulent environment of crises and is a key theme in this thesis.

A criticism of SHRD is that it has traditionally adopted a Resource Based View (RBV) to the role that it plays in strategy (Garavan et al., 2016; Koulpaki, Adams and Ovedijo, 2020). This approach argues that organisations possess unique bundles of assets, and the effective utilisation of these resources determines the difference in organisational performance. However, several authors have challenged the RBV based on two perspectives. The first being that RBV is based on stable external environments (Garavan, 2007; Kaufman, 2015). Secondly, Kaufman (2015) argues that RBV is weak in explaining the contribution of strategic HRD (SHRD) to organisational performance and competitive advantage. Kaufman (2015) argues that a RBV doesn't take into account the role of HRD in developing organisational effectiveness which can then reconfigure resources dynamically in response to changes in external and internal environments.

Of particular relevance to this study, is the challenge that applying an RBV to HRD in a post-crisis context could result in limited HRD value, due to an assumption that HRD practices operate most effectively within a stable environment. As such dynamic capabilities (DCs) and their role in SHRD have become an area of interest to HRD given the need to develop human capital to deal with rapidly changing environments and cope with environmental turbulence that align with organisational goals and objectives (Garavan et al., 2016). DCs could be unique capabilities that SHRD develop which support in the renewal, reconfiguration and recombination of human resources in conditions of environmental dynamism (Felin et al., 2012).



In summarising the main thematic waves of HRD it highlights a number of challenges to scholars and practitioners in demonstrating its value proposition. These include but are not limited to its contribution to organisational effectiveness, performance vs learning, the strategic role of HRD, and whether HRD contributes to the overall organisation's success (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016, p.69). In the next section I discuss how Dynamic Capabilities provide a promising area of research in understanding how HRD adds value in a crisis context.

#### **2.5.4 Defining and developing dynamic capabilities**

According to Koukpaki, Adams and Oyedijo (2020) DCs have become a focus for organisations as a means to develop and sustain competitive advantage for nearly three decades. Whilst there are challenges in defining the specific components of DCs, the original definition of Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) is widely used within the literature, stating that they are *'the firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments'*. DCs are typically measured across three dimensions, (1) *sensing environmental conditions*, (2) *learning response patterns* and (3) *reconfiguration of operational routines*. Sensing environmental conditions is the organisations' ability to make sense of the changes in the environment, set plans and seize opportunities (Garavan et al., 2016). Learning response patterns is the capability of an organisation to seize the identified opportunity through the acquiring or creating of specific knowledge (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000) and the improvement of learning practices such as knowledge sharing (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Reconfiguration capability is seen as the transformation of existing resources that allow organisations to address the changes in the market conditions (Teece, 2007). Underlying processes are central to conceptualisations of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007). Within the dynamic capabilities' literature, these are referred

to as micro foundations (Felin et al., 2012). Examples of micro foundations from the literature include learning practices, social interaction and relationship processes and knowledge processes (Felin et al., 2012). During the data collection and theory building stages, the dimensions of DCs became a helpful framework in demonstrating HRD value. By means of example, participants identified that HRD practices post-crisis adopted more collaborative knowledge sharing practices to reduce silos and open up communication. Social interaction and relationship processes were demonstrated by the relationship between the CEO and the HRD team within the BankCo (see section 6.6.3 for further examples).

### **2.5.5 Dynamic capabilities and HRD**

Within the literature, the interest on investigating DCs has remained largely within the strategy and HRM domains, with interest from an HRD perspective being nascent (Garavan et al., 2016). Reasons for this may be in part due to the challenge in defining the specific components of DCs (Kareem and Mijbas, 2019) along with the view as noted earlier that SHRD has traditionally adopted a RBV in the development of human capital (Garavan et al., 2016; Kaufman, 2015). Both sets of authors argue that between DCs and HRD there are strong parallels given that both concepts are underpinned by a focus on organisational learning, change and the development of capabilities. The development of capabilities depends on the role that HRD plays. Research into DCs and HRD shows that HRD influences organisational effectiveness (Kareem, 2019) and that DCs mediate the relationship between HRD, organisational effectiveness and firm performance (Aminu and Mahood, 2015). The empirical research of Kareem and Mijbas (2019), identify that to deliver organisational effectiveness, DCs are required as a means to sense environmental conditions, seize learning response patterns and reconfigure operating routines. Much of the research into DCs has taken place in organisations that

are going through change because of shifts in external environments such as technology innovations or changes in market conditions. To date there the role of DCs within a crisis context has not been investigated, which is an area that this study seeks to address. A key finding from this study that will be discussed in section 8.4 is that HRD is required to develop DCs within its own ranks as well as within the organisation (Garavan et al., 2016) and that DCs have obvious areas of commonality with characteristics of CM such as paying attention to weak signals and acting swiftly on these (Smith and Elliott, 2007). In section 2.6.2 I review and discuss the Dynamic SHRD capabilities framework (Garavan et al., 2016) which was helpful in the theory building process of this thesis. Having discussed how DCs are useful in understanding HRD value in a dynamic contexts such the post-crisis period, I conclude the review on HRD value by discussing the stakeholder perceptions literature on HRD value as it relates to this study.

### **2.5.6 HRD value and stakeholder perceptions**

Several authors have used a multiple constituency approach (Campbell and Lambright, 2016), to understand the perceived value of HRD practitioners amongst internal stakeholders (Garavan et al., 2019). In defining the membership of these subgroups, the work of Garavan et al., (2019) is helpful in identifying three main constituencies: (1) senior managers who expect HRD to perform strategic roles and understand the relevance of the external context to the organisational strategy, (2) line managers who have operational and tactical requirements from HRD such as mandatory training, (3) employees who expect their development needs will be addressed. Whilst there is a limited amount of empirical research that provides knowledge and understanding of stakeholder perceptions of HRD value in a post-crisis context, there does exist a comprehensive body of literature that examines perceptions of HR practices. In their

review of 105 articles that examined employee perceptions of HR practices, Wang et al., (2020), identify the ‘What’, the ‘How’ and the ‘Why’ of employee perceptions. The ‘What’ refers to the content of HR practices, the ‘How’ is the framing and positioning of these practices and the ‘Why’ considers how employees judge the motivations that sit behind HR practices. Their findings along with others highlight the gap that exists between perceptions between employee and managerial perceptions (Jensen et al., 2013; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). Furthermore, HR outcomes are dependent on *all* employee perceptions not just that of top management and line managers Bowen and Ostroff (2004).

In reviewing the literature, stakeholder perception of HRD roles in a crisis context has not adequately been addressed by empirical investigation (Dirani et al., 2020; Mitsakis, 2017). A small number of empirical studies with organisational stakeholders has been conducted post-GFC investigating aspects of HRD value such as SHRD maturity (Mitsakis, 2017; Mitsakis, 2023), HRD as a strategic partner post GFC (Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015), HRD investment following crisis (Zavyalova, Kucherov and Tsybova, 2018), the impact of economic crisis on HRD (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016) and the professional creditability of HR/D professionals (Aldrich et al., 2015). Further discussion on the findings of these studies is integrated into subsequent sections of this chapter, however a consistent theme is that stakeholders viewed the GFC as damaging to HRD value (Keeble-Ramsay and Armtiage, 2015). This view is also supported by Gold and Bratton (2014) suggesting that HRD has not emerged from the GFC in a position of strength, rather it is seen as a profession striving for self-legitimacy and more intent on ‘looking after their own jobs, rather than doing their jobs’ (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012).

In reviewing these empirical studies what remains unclear is how the expectations of these stakeholder groups differs in the context of crisis. For example, it is possible that senior managers may have limited expectations of HRD in the containment stage of a crisis when the focus is on survival and tactical decision-making rather than strategic issues (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019). Similarly, line managers may have requirements of HRD to support them to make sense of the crisis with their teams or deal with issues around emotional and psychological impacts of the crisis (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Employees could have development requirements that change over time during the crisis, especially if they are required to meet demands from new stakeholders such as the regulator (Aldrich et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding and interpreting stakeholder perceptions throughout the entire crisis timeline is a contribution that this study will make to the HRD/CM literature.

### **2.5.7 Summary: HRD value**

In understanding HRD value, a gap in the literature, to which this study contributes, is that the majority of the literature assumes a steady organisational state or indeed one of organisational growth in which HRD operates within (Garavan et al., 2016). The impact of the GFC created a context where both the external environment in terms of the global capital markets and the internal organisational environments were characterised by extreme turbulence.

As noted in the previous section, previous debates on HRD value have focused on its contribution to organisational effectiveness, performance vs learning, the strategic role

of HRD, and whether HRD contributes to the overall organisation's success (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016, p69). I would argue that the crisis context requires each of these elements of HRD value to be delivered by HRD. As will be discussed in section 2.7.3, crises create specific organisational goals which in turn create different success measures than what might be required in more normal circumstances. For example, post-crisis lessons need to be learnt at an individual, group and organisational level to support in organisational strategic planning, specifically in the development and execution of organisational CM goals (Garavan 2007; Wang, Hutchins, and Garavan, 2009,). Similarly, the extent to which SHRD is mature post-crisis in developing environmental scanning can have an impact on how organisational effectiveness integrates, builds, reconfigures internal and external resources to address environmental changes such as regulatory compliance in areas such as training (Aldrich et al., 2015).

Therefore, a concern for the HRD field is that if it has struggled to demonstrate its value in times of relative calm, how can it position itself as a strategic function in organisational contexts as presented by the GFC (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). A requirement for HRD to develop dynamic capabilities provides a potentially promising area where HRD can demonstrate value in a post-crisis context. In the next section I position HRD as an environmentally integrated strategic partner to the organisation. This will be followed by discussing and integrating two theoretical frameworks that are useful in understanding HRD value in dynamic contexts, the SHRD maturity framework developed by Mitsakis (2017) and the Dynamic SHRD capabilities (DSHRDC) framework by Garavan et al., (2016). Both models were used in the theory-building process of this study.

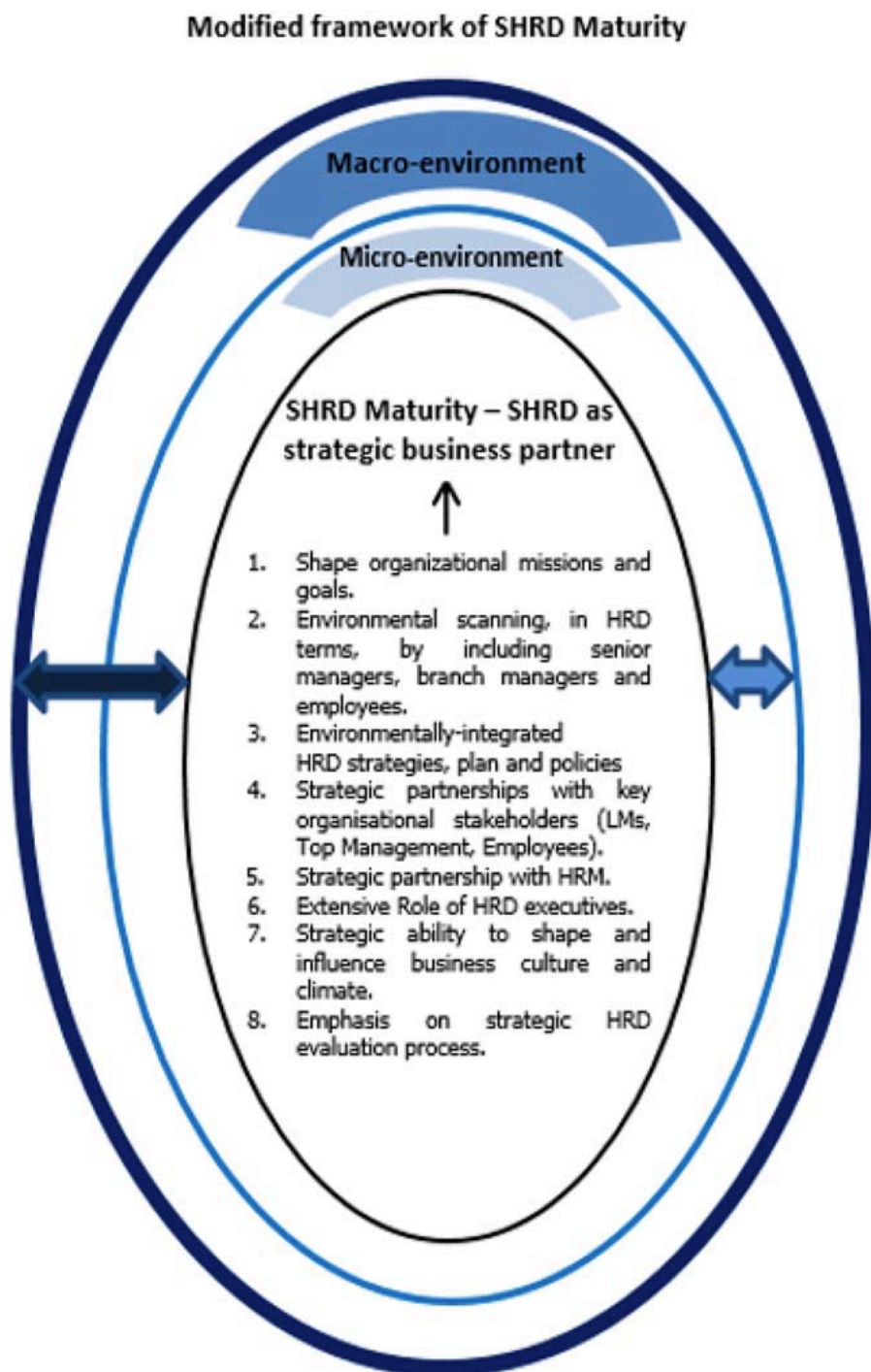
## **2.6 HRD as an environmentally integrated strategic partner**

In the previous section I have identified that a limitation of the existing HRD value literature is that it doesn't consider changes in the external and internal environments, rather it assumes a steady state. However, the recent work of Mitsakis (2017) in revising McCracken and Wallace's (2000a) SHRD framework and the conceptual Dynamic SHRD Capabilities (DSHRDCs) framework by Garavan et al.; (2016) explain how HRD can respond strategically to environmental factors and demonstrate value. In line with a grounded theory approach both theories were helpful in the theory development within this study. They provide an understanding of the importance of internal and external integration of HRD plans and practices to support the organisational mission, the engagement of key stakeholders and the development of specific dynamic capabilities (DCs) both within HRD across the wider organisation. In the following sections I will review the Mitsakis (2017) SHRD maturity framework followed by the Garavan et al.; (2016) DSHRDC framework, discussing how both theories integrate with one another using existing empirical research to highlight current knowledge and identify gaps that this study seeks to address.

### **2.6.1 The SHRD maturity framework (Mistakis, 2017)**

Grounded in an empirical study within the context of the GFC in the Greek Banking sector, an important development in the Mitsakis (2017) SHRD maturity framework (see Fig 2.1 on the following page) is the evolution of previous SHRD models that considered horizontal and vertical integration of HRD practices. Garavan (1991; 2007) developed a perspective that HRD implementations should integrate both horizontally and vertically with organisational objectives. Mitsakis (2017), proposes that HRD should construct 'the axis of an organisation's life through a multi-dimensional

integration that includes both vertical and horizontal, but also internal and external' (2017, p.287).



**Figure 2-1 Mitsakis, 2017 modified framework of SHRD maturity**

How SHRD responds and adapts to the external and internal environment is also a key component of the Garavan et al.; (2016) DSHRDC framework with the authors



suggesting that such integration is necessary if the organisation is to maintain competitive advantage during turbulent contexts. Mitsakis (2017) considers both the micro (internal) and macro (external) environments as potential influencers of SHRD maturity and identifies 8 strategic components that draw heavily on the McCracken and Wallace (2000a, 2000b) SHRD model. The post-crisis context within the banking sector was characterised by significant changes in how HRD operated with many of their practices dramatically altered (Aldrich et al., 2015; Mitsakis, 2017). This acknowledgement of the impact of external and internal environments on HRD practices provides a valuable addition to understanding the HRD value in a post-crisis context. For example, participants within this study described the regulatory environment that banks were forced to operate in as both an enabler and barrier to HRD value (see section 4.2).

Wang, Hutchins and Garavan (2009) also emphasise the importance of the external and internal environment when considering SHRD's role in CM. Their approach adapts the Garavan SHRD model (2007) suggesting an interrelation between the global environment, the organisational context, profile of HRD practitioners and organisational stakeholders. However, the complexity of the Garavan (2007) SHRD model makes it difficult to operationalise especially in complex and dynamic contexts (Mitsakis, 2019) and was not used in the theory development of this study. The extent to which environmental issues such as changes in regulation, or an organisation's crisis stage may have an impact on HRD practices within CM has not been adequately researched and are gaps in our understanding and knowledge of HRD value post-crisis that this study will seek to address.

The Mitsakis (2017) SHRD maturity framework reinforces the need for a strategic partnership with HRM practices which has been widely recognised (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a, 2000b; Garavan, 1991). Similarly, within the DSHRDC framework, Garavan et al.; (2016) note that ideally both HRD and HRM work in parallel to complement each other's services. Simply put, 'SHRD should align strategies and practices with HRM strategies and align with each other' (Garavan et al., 2016, p.7). A challenge as noted in the empirical research by Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, (2016) is that HR and by extension HRD practices can be viewed differently by each stakeholder group within the same organisation. Empirical research shows that the ways in which HRD manages and fulfils its internal customer expectations affects stakeholder perceptions of its value and effectiveness in the organisation (Alagaraja, 2013). The perceptions held about HRD are a critical factor in the reality of the practice of HRD and should include the views of those within the wider HR function, as identified by Anderson (2009) when investigating the views of line managers on HRD practices. Anderson (2009) observes that there has been limited work to understand HR/D from within its own ranks, which is an area that this study addresses by capturing the perceptions of HR/D practitioners along with the other stakeholder groups such as senior leadership, line managers and employees (Garavan et al., 2019). The lack of knowledge on how HRM practices impact HRD in a post-crisis context and warrants further investigation.

A useful addition with the Mitsakis (2017) framework is that each of the strategic components has indicators which help determine the level of SHRD maturity and can provide criteria which can be used to evaluate HRD value post-crisis. Of relevance to this study is the inclusion of strategic criteria that involves environmental scanning from

a variety of stakeholders that result in environmentally integrated HRD strategies, plans and policies. *Helpfully, Garavan et al.; (2016) in their framework provide detailed explanation of how this scanning may take place through the development of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring capabilities (2016, p.8). Mitsakis (2017) also focuses on strategic business-partnering with line managers which supports the literature that in a crisis context leadership play a vital role (Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, 2017; Bhaduri, 2019). As the findings chapters will illustrate, participants viewed the role of the line manager as being integral in a post-crisis context (see section 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 for examples).*

A mature SHRD function is one, Mitsakis (2017) argues where it can shape and influence corporate culture and climate. As noted earlier, creating a learning and change orientated culture are important HRD practices post-crisis (Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, 2017; Hutchins and Wang, 2008). Using a field-study approach Kebble-Ramsay and Armitage (2015) conducted focus groups with approximately 100 employees across a range of sectors within the UK, examining HRD value across four practices, change, culture, IT and communications. In relation to culture, the findings of Kebble-Ramsay and Armitage (2015) showed employees felt they had no part to play in the creation of a post-crisis organisational culture, hence losing the ability to help shape and influence organisational change. Additionally, there was evidence of a much more autocratic style of leadership that had a pre-occupation with a culture of compliance. They concluded that the GFC ‘back-footed’ HRD with the perception that HRD post-crisis was largely limited to a silent partner role rather than acting as a strategic partner. They also noted that employees perceived HRD as being an instigator of task-led technological training rather than acting as a strategic partner. Whether HRD is able to

play a more strategic role in both shaping and responding to corporate strategy in a crisis context remains unanswered according to the empirical research of Mitsakis and Aravopoulou (2016) and is an area that warrants further attention which this study aims to address.

The SHRD maturity framework challenges some of the limitations of the McCracken and Wallace (2000a, 2000b) SHRD model regarding HRD evaluation which Mitsakis (2017) views as having an over emphasis on short-term, cost-effective financially driven evaluation. He suggests a more strategic long-term approach which assesses individual and organisational change and growth which considering that crises tend to extend over time would be a more appropriate approach to evaluate HRD practices. Empirical evidence from the Russian IT sector shows that HRD investment post crisis may continue against a backdrop of cost-cutting measures if effective business cases based on robust evaluation data is presented to management (Zavyalova, Kucherov and Tsybova, 2018) This is an area that warrants further attention, which this study will address investigating the relationship between evaluation and investment in HRD practices post-crisis.

Mitsakis (2017) was able to apply the SHRD maturity framework in assessing employee perspectives from two Greek banking institutions related to pre and post crisis perceptions of SHRD maturity. Similar to other empirical studies (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015), the findings showed that SHRD had suffered a set-back as a result of the GFC.

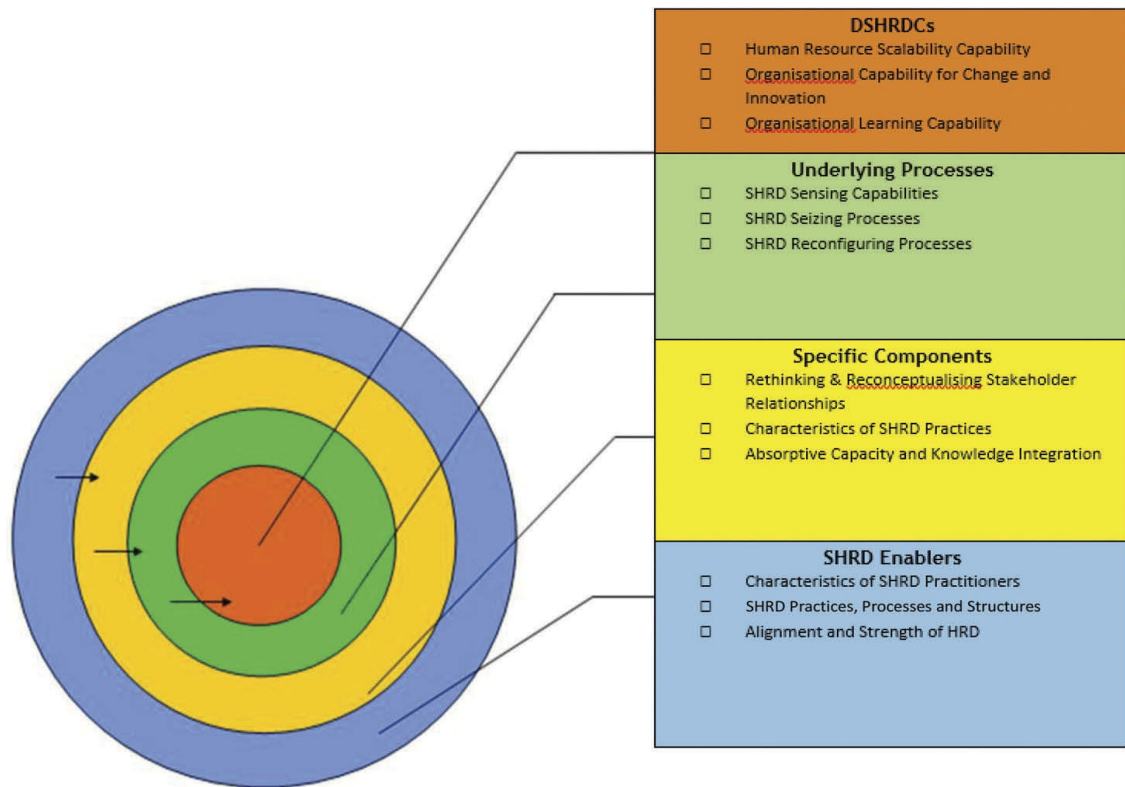
Mitsakis (2017) focused primarily on the perceptions of employees which presented some challenges in using this population to make judgements on the strategic nature of HRD. His study shows that often employee perception related to HRD is hampered by lack of exposure to decision-making around strategy and organisational goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). More recently the SHRD framework was applied to gain manager perspectives through interviews with 44 branch and HR managers within two Greek banks in 2019 (Mitsakis, 2023). The findings were consistent with his 2017 study highlighting the negative impact of the economic crisis on HRD with SHRD seen more as an aspiration rather than an organisational reality by these stakeholders (Mitsakis, 2023).

This study attempts to build on the work of Mitsakis (2017, 2023) by including the view of senior management (C Suite), senior HR/D practitioners and external learning partners to provide a more rounded perspective. A further opportunity to build on the Mitsakis (2017, 2023) research is understanding within an event-based sequence approach to crisis, which SHRD practices are relevant and what the enablers are for these.

In reviewing the Mitsakis (2017) SHRD maturity framework, I have highlighted several areas of commonality between his work and that of the DSHRDC framework (Garavan et al.; 2016). Namely the importance of external and internal environmental factors on HRD practices, a need for HRD and HRM to be integrated and the need for HRD to develop environmental scanning capabilities. In the following section I will further review the DSHRDC framework, highlighting gaps in our knowledge that this study will seek to address.

### **2.6.2 The dynamic SHRD capabilities framework (Garavan et al., 2016)**

The Garavan et al., (2016) framework differs from the empirically grounded work of Mistakis' (2017) in that it adopts a conceptual approach to understanding DCs within SHRD by integrating empirical or conceptual literature on DCs addressing SHRD. The framework uses four concentric rings (see Figure 2.2 on the following page) that does not propose causal directions amongst the various components, rather it specifies layers of influence moving from the outside to the specific DSHRDCs in the central circle. The outer ring conceptualises characteristics of SHRD in organisations that generate DSHRDCs and focus on SHRD practitioner characteristics, SHRD processes and structures and the alignment of SHRD with HRM. As noted in the previous section, alignment of HRD and HRM is part of the Mitsakis (2017) framework also. Both Zulkarnaini et al., (2019) and Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) advocate for a close working relationship between HRD and the wider HR function in a post-crisis context, with Zagelmeyer and Gollan (2012) suggesting that the HR and by extension the HRD function is highly important post-crisis as they understand the processes and structures which may have created the crisis.



**Figure 2-2 Dynamic SHRD capabilities: an integrative framework. Garavan et al., (2016)**

However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to better understand in what ways HRD and HRM stakeholders might work together post-crisis which is an area this study will address. Regarding HRD practitioner characteristics, empirical research conducted in the UK capital markets and investment banking sector prior to and following the GFC identifies that the extent to which HR practitioners are perceived to possess technical and professional knowledge, coupled with knowledge and experience of the business, are indicators of HRD value (Aldrich et al., 2015). Their study also found that HR's influence was modest with the pre-disposition of the CEO being a determining factor in HR creditability which reinforces the research of Gubbins and Garavan (2009) on the role that social capital and networks play in determining HRD value. The work of Aldrich et al., (2015) is important in this thesis research for several reasons. It provides empirical data that shows that HR and by extension HRD's influence within the UK

banking industry pre-crisis was limited. Secondly it identifies that possessing appropriate technical and professional knowledge is seen as valuable by senior leaders and raises important questions about how a lack of creditability makes it much harder for HRD to establish value. In the context of the GFC, this can be extended to ask whether HRD practitioners had appropriate knowledge of CM practices and principles that would have been valuable to the organisation. This study provides an opportunity to clarify those conclusions and develop further knowledge and understanding of the SHRD practitioner characteristics within the Garavan et al.; (2016) framework.

The empirical research of Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, (2016) is helpful in understanding stakeholder perceptions of HRD given the context of their study within the banking sector, albeit within the Greek national context. Their study comprised of a multi-stakeholder approach within two banks and consisted of 76 semi-structured interviews with HR, management and employees and focused upon participants perceptions of HRD/SHRD. The findings showed that HRD was a ‘function in retreat’ (2016, p79) with conflicting views amongst stakeholder groups within the same organisation on HRDs creditability and legitimacy. Overall, their study raises questions on the capability of HRD to support the organisation in dealing effectively with the crisis and its ability to moving forward.

The next ring within the DSHRDC framework focuses on specific components of DSHRDCs, namely; recalibration of stakeholder relationships, characteristics of SHRD practices, absorptive capacity, and knowledge integration. Of importance to this study in addressing the research question is the suggestion that within dynamic environments, new actors or stakeholders become more important or of a higher priority. Mistakis (2017) also identifies the importance of key stakeholder relationships and has a



particular emphasis on employee voice as an important stakeholder group. A benefit of the DSHRDC framework in this study is that it specifically references stakeholders that may be external to the organisation and can include but are not limited to regulatory agencies, new business units and management teams and new relationships. Within the UK and Irish banking sector, post-crisis, the role of the government and regulator became a major driver for organisational change, along with the restructuring of new management teams which required HRD to reconfigure existing practices to meet the requirements of these relationships. Aldrich et al., (2015) in their empirical study state that HR practitioners' creditability in banking will be judged on their ability to interpret and execute regulatory driven initiatives. A gap in our knowledge and understanding is how HRD may have been effective in developing relationships with regulatory stakeholders.

The DSHRDC framework identifies the need for HRD to develop 'absorptive capacity'. This involves accessing external knowledge and integrating that knowledge throughout the organisation and consists of three dimensions (1) recognising external knowledge value (2) applying knowledge for transformation (3) embedding of new knowledge into everyday practices (Tehrani, 2013). Crisis are known to occur due to the development of a 'bounded mindset' on the part of managerial decision-making and a reluctance to engage with the views of outsiders (Smith and Elliott, 2007). How HRD leverages the use of external experts in a crisis context is an area that has not been sufficiently researched and is a gap in our understanding.

Whilst Mitsakis (2017) encourages environmental scanning to ensure SHRD is mature, the DSHRDC framework provides specific capabilities which need to be mature within

HRD if it is to be proactive in continually scanning and acting on changes in the external and internal environments. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ring of the DSHRDC framework focuses on three micro foundations, sensing, seizing and reconfiguration capabilities. SHRD sensing capabilities involves the ability to scan the environment, make sense of events, initiate plans, capitalise on opportunities and configure existing operational capabilities. A criticism of SHRD was its inability in the lead up to the GFC to understand the external environment and apply that to HRD practices (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012). Seizing processes help SHRD to apply insights from their scanning capability and respond to these opportunities. This can involve the development of new delivery models and the redeployment of HRD resources to realise new ways of doing things.

It is well documented that the GFC was caused in part by knowledge, skills and intellectual failures of those leading their organisations and a collapse in collective sense-making (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012, 2014; Whittle and Mueller, 2012). Given this failure in the appropriate development of human capital, HRD has come under criticism for the part that it played in creating the conditions that allowed the GFC to occur in the first place (Gold and Bratton, 2014). A more critical stance on the role that HRD played in the creation of the GFC by aligning the HRD strategy with organisational goals that were focused on wealth maximisation has been suggested by MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery (2012, 2014). Applying a Cognitive Appraisal Model, they reviewed secondary data from a range of public enquiries post GFC and concluded that HRD helped create a culture where certain behaviours pre-crisis were acceptable to employees, specifically that there was no downside in risk taking (2012, p47). They go onto suggest that SHRD failed to develop the skills of leaders to ask questions and challenge the dominant mindset of the marketplace (2012, p.47). As a

result, HRD may have become an unwitting pawn, legitimising behaviours that led to excessive risk-taking. Therefore, the DSHRDC framework is helpful in identifying specific capabilities that HRD should develop which can support organisational crisis management goals, namely the ability to sense, seize and reconfigure itself in response to changing environmental conditions.

The inner circle of the DSHRDC framework identifies three dynamic capabilities that SHRD can contribute to developing as a result of the enablers, components and micro foundations. These are human resource scalability, organisational capability for change and organisational learning capability. The micro foundation of reconfiguration capability involves the ability of SHRD to make changes in how it balances roles, tasks, resources and actions. The reconfiguration process within SHRD allows it to consider how it develops its own approach to DSHRDCs in order that it might enhance the organisational level dynamic capabilities. Studies that have sought to understand the relationship between HRD and DCs are limited however the evidence from Hsu and Wang, (2012) and Kareem and Mijbas, (2019), does confirm that DCs are based on the outcomes of HRD practices that develop specific capabilities that support the organisation to respond more productively to environmental changes. In their study within Iraq universities, Kareem and Mijbas (2019) found that HRD practices influence both organisational effectiveness and DCs. Their study also found DCs mediate the relationship between HRD and organisational effectiveness. They argue that the relationship between HRD practices and organisational effectiveness is not direct in changing business environments but through the mediating role of DCs (2019, p198). Whilst their research is not crisis specific, their conclusions are important in providing empirical evidence to support the rationale that post-crisis, if HRD wishes to contribute to organisational effectiveness, then it should include a focus on the role that DCs can

play at the HRD function and organisational level. This study will provide empirical evidence that will extend knowledge and understanding on how this reconfiguration process within HRD practitioners occurs in a post-crisis context and importantly, how it is perceived by organisational stakeholders as an indicator of HRD value.

Having reviewed both the Mitsakis (2017) SHRD Maturity framework and the DSHRDC framework developed by Garavan et al., (2016), I will conclude with discussing opportunities that this study provides to develop and extend on both theories.

### **2.6.3 Integrating the SHRD maturity (Mitsakis, 2017) and DSHRDC (Garavan et al.; 2016) frameworks**

Integrating both the Mitsakis (2017) SHRD maturity framework and the DSHRDC framework (Garavan et al., 2016) provides a comprehensive approach to SHRD within a dynamic context and provides avenues for further research. Table 2.1 below summarises the key areas of commonality between both frameworks and identifies gaps in our knowledge and understanding that this study seeks to address.

**Table 2.1 Mapping Mitsakis (2017) SHRD Maturity and Garavan et al., (2016) DSHRDC's**

<b>Dynamic SHRD (Mitsakis, 2017; Garavan et al., 2016)</b>	<b>Gaps in our knowledge and understanding</b>
Environmentally integrated HRD practices	The role of external factors such as regulation and internal crisis stages on HRD provision
HRD/HRM alignment	The nature of HRD/HRM provision to support organisational CM goals
Environmental scanning capabilities	How HRD develops sensing, seizing and reconfiguring capabilities within its ranks and the wider organisation in a crisis context
Stakeholder relationships	How HRD develops external and internal relationships that support it operating as a strategic partner in a crisis context
SHRD characteristics	Specific technical and professional knowledge required by HRD in a crisis context

The review of the literature identified that there has been one further empirical study undertaken investigating manager perspectives of SHRD maturity in Greek banks by Mitsakis (2023). At the stage of writing, no further empirical research has been undertaken on the Garavan et al., (2016). Several studies have been cited which provide knowledge and information on components of each framework. These studies identify that organisational stakeholders viewed HRD as being in a weakened position following the GFC (Aldrich et al., 2015; Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017, 2023). This view is also supported by Gold and Bratton (2014) suggesting that HRD has not emerged from the GFC in a position of strength. A limitation of these studies, however, is that they were not methodologically designed to assess a proxy longitudinal view of HRD value following a crisis. Given the majority of the research was conducted in the earlier stages of the GFC it does not provide an understanding as to whether employee perceptions changed as organisations moved through to recovery and renewal stages (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019). Furthermore, the sample group used in these studies did not consist of a wide range of stakeholders including senior management and those within HRD which may have resulted in a perception bias (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). These are gaps which this study seeks to address through its research design.

To date, there has been insufficient attention given to the context issues of HRD and DCs which supports the research area of this study looking at HRD in a post-crisis context (Garavan et al., 2016). Secondly, there is opportunity to explore how components of SHRD have an impact on DCs, such as how do HRD practitioners' environmental scanning capabilities shape the responses of the SHRD function. This can be investigated by exploring how HRD responses varied within each of the crisis stages. Finally, Garavan et al., (2016) suggest that research on HRD within a dynamic

context requires novel and multi-level research designs with a focus on understanding better what the longitudinal impacts are on DCs. As noted in section 2.4.1, the approach used within this study provides an opportunity to understand HRD value at an organisational, function and individual level associated with a proxy longitudinal dimension comprising of the post-crisis period.

In the next section I will examine the HRD and CM literature that was used in the theory development process beginning with an overview of how this section of the thesis is structured.

## **2.7 The HRD and crisis management literature: overview**

In the following sections I identify the relevant literature that helps us understand what we currently know about HRD roles in CM. I begin with presenting the rationale for adopting an event-based sequence approach to crisis and the Mitroff (2005) CM model. I then look at how metaphors have been used by scholars to define HRD value roles within CM. Following this I discuss how the HRD metaphor literature integrates with the Mitroff (2005) CM model.

### **2.7.1 Adopting an event-based sequence approach to crisis within the study**

Grounded theory encourages the on-going development of theory through the interplay between data and the literature. It was through this iterative process as part of the data analysis and theory building that I identified participants described HRD value in the context of an event-based sequence, i.e., that there are several stages in a crisis cycle.

The effects of the GFC were prolonged, lasting over several years as organisations went

through stages of containing the impact of the crisis, moving through recovery and finally into a renewal stage. Developments within the CM field have moved away from a single event-based perspective to an event-based sequence (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019; Mitroff, 2005). This process builds on the recognition (a) that most crises are not sudden occurrences but follow a period of precognition and red flags (b) that managers have a wide range of proactive processes and practices which can be implemented to identify, pre-empt or prevent potential crises, or to mitigate the duration and impact of those which do occur and (c) crisis are processes extended in time and place (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019; Roux-Dufort, 2007; Shrivastava, 1993). This position is supported by Buchanan and Denyer (2013) and James, Wooten and Dushek (2011) who suggest that adopting an event sequence approach provides a helpful bridge between the extreme nature of crisis and the interests of those within mainstream management study in an attempt to be able to understand problems and solutions and develop generalizable theory.

Whilst the event-based sequence approach perspective is helpful, Langley (1999) notes that by adopting this approach, researchers should be mindful that the models used are not *'predicable, sequential processes, but simply a way of structuring the description of the events'* (p.703). Adopting an event-based sequence approach provides HRD with insights into not only what constitutes effective CM practice within each crisis stage, but also helps identify the appropriate roles that HRD are required to develop (James and Wooten, 2009) and is an example of what mainstream management scholars and practitioners see as a valuable contribution from CM research. However, a gap in the literature is empirically grounded research that investigates what these specific HRD roles are within each of the crisis stages. Having clarified my rationale for adopting an

event-based sequence approach, in the next section I provide an explanation for my choice in using the Mitroff (2005) CM event-based sequence model.

### **2.7.2 Event-based sequence models: overview**

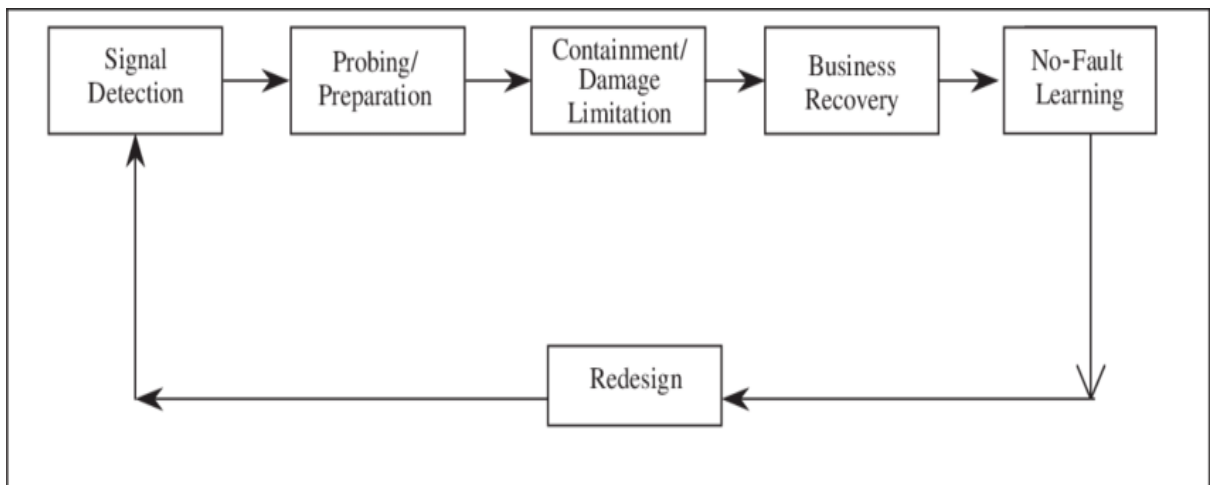
An iterative process of reviewing crisis models along with the data from the study identified that Mitroff's (2005) model would be the most appropriate to help explain how the GFC unfolded within the banking sector. This was because it most closely aligned with participants descriptions of the post-crisis period that consisted of a containment, recovery and renewal stage and helped explain the complex relationship between technological and social elements such as management behaviour and information gaps. The Mitroff (2005) model is also the most widely cited crisis model. Other crisis models such as Normal Accident Theory (Perrow, 1981) and High Reliability Organisations (HRO's) (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003; Roberts, Stout and Halpern, 1994) were discounted for several reasons. Normal accident theory has more applicability for industries such as Oil and Gas and transportation which focus heavily on technical systems, which if they fail result in crisis. Critics of normal accident theory contend that the lack of criteria for the measurement of components of the theory (tight coupling and complexity), limit its applicability to mainstream industries such as the banking industry (Hopkins, 2014). High reliability theory also tends to focus on organisations that operate in unforgiving environments where the potential for error can often result in loss of life. HRO's have a high focus on damage prevention whereas the phenomenon under examination in this study focuses on the post-crisis context. HRO's are known for the emphasis that is given to learning from the weak signals that are given out at all levels within the organisation and is referred to as 'sensemaking' by Weick and Sutcliffe, (2003). Sensemaking is primarily concerned with becoming aware of signs that are at variance with the norm, anomalies with the system that interrupt the



pattern (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). A criticism of HRO theory is that few organisations have the extremely complex technology that is evident in these organisations; therefore, the lessons to be learned are limited and not necessarily applicable to mainstream organisations (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). Having outlined my rationale for selecting the Mitroff (2005) CM model, I will provide an overview of the model in the next section.

### 2.7.3 Mitroff, (2005) Crisis Management Model

The Mitroff (2005) model of *Crisis Management* (Fig 2.3 below) uses an event-based sequence approach and builds on the work of Turner’s (1994) Crisis Incubation Model in adopting a socio-technical view of crisis. Turner (1994) argued that despite the best intentions of all involved, systems can, be subverted by some familiar and normal processes of organisational life such as communication and information gaps and management behaviour.



**Figure 2-3 Mitroff and Pearson, 1993; Mitroff, 2005 crisis management model**

The GFC was known to display several warning signs which were largely ignored and were allowed to incubate under the surface until the collapse of the sub-prime market

resulted in the house of cards effect across the globe (Cohan, 2009). A criticism of HRD is that pre-crisis it aligned itself too closely with the banking's wealth maximisation objectives and in doing so lost sight of its role to act as the conscience of the organisation whereby it may have been able to identify and respond to these warning signs (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012).

Within the Mitroff model (2005), the first stage, *signal detection* requires attention to early warning signals that announce the possibility of a crisis. In the second stage, the focus is on preparation practices such as *emergency planning and business continuity* exercises. The third stage *containment* attempts to lessen the impact of the crisis with a focus on survival. During the *recovery stage*, attention turns to returning the organisation to a more mature pre-crisis condition whilst embedding crisis learning. Within the fifth stage, *a focus is on learning* with the final sixth stage *redesign* taking the learning and reapplying that back into the system to help support *signal detection* practices and ensuring that the organisation is more aware of threats that might result in future crises occurring.

James and Wooten (2010) note the unpredictable nature of crises and caution reducing CM research to simplistic linear approaches as used by Mitroff (2005). Yet, if an objective of HRD is to operate strategically in CM practices, I would suggest that the Mitroff model (2005) is useful in helping to bring understanding on CM organisational goals and how HRD might best support these. However, a lack of empirical research has limited further theorizing, knowledge and understanding on specific HRD roles that support CM.

Previous authors have used components of Mitroff's (2005) framework to link CM stages, CM goals and HRD roles, providing a conceptual structure upon which future research can be build (Bhaduri, 2019; Wooten and James, 2008; James and Wooten, 2010). They highlight HRD practices that can include environmental scanning for opportunities and threats, developing CM policies and procedures, working with line management on operational issues and fostering a learning culture (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; James and Wooten, 2010). The Mitroff (2005) CM model emphasises the role of organisational learning as a key characteristic in developing an organisation's ability to advert and manage a crisis (Pidgeon and O'Leary, 2000; Pearson and Mitroff, 2019). Other capabilities that HRD can develop in CM include crisis communications (Dirani et al., 2020), action learning workshops (Boin, Stern and Sundelius, 2016), and storytelling to make meaning from a crisis event (Eray, 2018; Kopp et al., 2011).

In sections 2.7.5 I will explain how this thesis integrates the Mitroff (2005) model with the key HRD role metaphor literature of Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) and Hutchins and Wang (2008). In the next section I will examine the role of HRD metaphors as a lens that HRD scholars have used to explain HRD value in CM.

#### **2.7.4 Metaphors as a lens to describe HRDs value in crisis**

As part of the grounded theory development process, participants used a range of metaphors to describe HRD value. As a result, in reviewing the literature I identified how metaphors can bring definition and clarity to HRD research and have been widely utilised (Kuchinke, 2001; Short 2000). Metaphors have been advanced in the HRD literature to emphasize a particular view of the disciplinary grounding of HRD and/or

the constructivist approach to HRD (Short, 2000). This approach highlights the evolving changeable nature of HRD endowing the field with flexibility to adapt to new environments and surroundings. It also signals that HRD is not a fixed entity and can embrace new disciplines as the need arises (Ellinger, Ellinger and Fitzer, 2014). Metaphorical language is one of the most important devices by which new knowledge and understandings of social phenomena is generated (Gherardi, Jensen and Nerland, 2017). Metaphors within HRD have three potential uses; to help describe the nature and focus of the field to those outside it, to help communicate complex aspects of the field to those within and outside of HRD (in the case of this study to other areas such as CM), and thirdly to contribute to discussions to advance the field (Short, 2000, p.330). Their use allows organisations to frame existing realities into new opportunities, to reflect and design different, previously not thought of viewpoints, and schemas, while removing past contradictions and assumptions (Ricketts and Seiling, 2003, p.37).

Metaphors have been used as a tool to understand stakeholder perceptions of HRD roles. Ardchivili (2001) in examining HRD consultant's perceptions of their roles observed that HRD roles were described as farmers, magicians spinning plates and people on a journey. Saglam and Konakioglu (2017) in their review of 103 Turkish HR practitioners who interviewed for a national HR magazine over a 10-year period found that 146 metaphors were used to describe HR including change agent, problem finder, having a seat at the table and captain. More recently Dirani et al., (2020) examined HRD roles in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic and identified five HRD metaphors that were required by HRD: sense-maker, technology enabler, emotional supporter, innovative communicator and financial health reassurer. The literature shows that organisational stakeholders use a range of metaphors to describe HRD roles and

these metaphors may change based on context and stakeholder group and given that metaphors are partial, several may be needed to describe a concept such as HRD value (Gubbins et al., 2012).

While metaphors can be powerful tools that enable research participants to express their assumptions and meanings regarding a particular topic or concept, they may limit participants' focus and as Morgan (1986) has acknowledged, "Metaphor is inherently paradoxical. It can create powerful insights that also become distortions, as the way of seeing created through a metaphor becomes a way of not seeing" (1986, p. 5). In terms of analysing metaphors, Andriessen and Gubbins (2009) acknowledge that "there is much debate about the way metaphor works" (2009, p. 847), in terms of whether "metaphor is simply a matter of comparison, highlighting the analogies in the source and target domain of the metaphor, or whether a metaphor does more than that" (2009, p. 847). The use of metaphor in HRD has been criticised for its over-reliance and value placed on perception data rather than other well-defined analysis and inquiry methods (Swanson, 2002).

Despite these potential limitations, I suggest that the use of metaphors could be pragmatically useful to the research participants and organisations in which data is collected because they offer a lens into organisational stakeholder groups assumptions and beliefs about the context in which they work and learn. From a research perspective, using metaphors as an alternative and complementary form of data collection for analysis and triangulation purposes may enable researchers to broaden

their understanding about abstract concepts and topics and enhance internal validity and trustworthiness of qualitative data (Ardchivili 2001; Short, 2000).

In this section I have presented my rationale for using metaphors to address the research question based on the usefulness of metaphors in describing socially constructed phenomena such as crisis, and the use of metaphors by participants to describe HRD value. In the next section I examine how scholars have used metaphor as a lens to describe HRD value in CM and provide an explanation of how the CM/HRD role metaphor literature can be integrated into the Mitroff (2005) CM model based on these themes being present in the data that was developed as part of the grounded theory approach.

### **2.7.5 HRD roles within the Mitroff (2005) CM model**

Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) have used an event-based sequential approach along with components of the Mitroff (2005) model to frame their conceptual Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man (MHR) framework for roles that HR and by extension HRD can undertake in CM. They simplify the crisis sequence into three stages, pre-crisis, the crisis itself and post-crisis. Within each stage they suggest specific roles that support CM goals. In the pre-crisis stage, by adopting a *Mentor* role, the focus is on preparing employees for a crisis. During the crisis stage, employees are required to be supported through the emotional and psychological impacts of the crisis by adopting a *Healer* role. Post-crisis, as a *Renaissance Man*, HRD can provide leadership, reminding employees that they have survived the crisis and help in the re-articulation of new values and the road to recovery. A contribution of the MHR framework is that it attempts to map HRD

roles to specific stages within the event-based sequence approach. Their work provides new understanding into opportunities for HRD to adopt value add roles. The approach by Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) is helpful by addressing areas that others who use role metaphors in CM/HRD such as Hutchins and Wang (2008) don't address, such as the emotional and psychological impact of a crisis through the *Healer* role. However, by choosing a three stage approach the MHR framework lacks some of the detail that is provided in Mitroff's model (2005) including HRD practices in the learning and redesign stages. Table 2.2 below shows how the MHR framework integrates with the Mitroff (2005) crisis stages.

**Table 2.2 Mapping Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) HRD roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages**

Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) MHR CM/HR Model	Mitroff (2005) CM Stage
Mentor	Signal Detection and Preparation
Healer	Containment
Renaissance Man	Recovery

In developing their MHR framework, Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) suggest that crises are often seen as 'major acts of betrayal on behalf of the organisation to employees' (Mitroff, 2005.p.39) and one of the roles that HR/D can play is in re-engaging the hearts and minds of employees by adopting a *Healer* role in providing emotional and psychological support. A criticism of CM has been that it often places humans at the bottom of the list, whilst emphasising the recovery of systems, operations, infrastructure and public relations (Lockwood, 2005). As a *Renaissance Man*, a key requirement of HRD is to promote and share value with employees (Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018, p.22) with a re-articulation of values and purpose to help promote a journey of recovery

and renewal. Understanding what specific HRD practices support the MHR framework requires further empirical research. Also, the authors refer to the HR function, with reference to HRD practices throughout their framework which requires further investigation into what aspects of their work relates to HRD vs more general HRM practices.

Hutchins and Wang, (2008) have also attempted to describe HRD's role in CM through Watkins (1989) five philosophical metaphors for HRD. These roles are, HRD practitioners as *organisational problem solvers, change agents, organisational designers, organisational empowerer/meaning makers* and *developers of human capital*. Watkins' metaphors are the most widely adopted within academic and practitioner disciplines and have been used to describe HRD in other inter-disciplinary contexts such as CSR and change (Han et al., 2017; Jang and Ardichvili, 2015). The approach taken by Hutchins and Wang (2008) is helpful in identifying specific roles that HRD can perform within a crisis context. Unlike Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018), they don't align specific roles with crisis stages. However, in reviewing their role descriptions and integrating these with Mitroff's (2005) model along with existing CM/HRD literature it is possible to conceptually map their HRD roles to crisis stages as shown in table 2.3 on the following page. A key contribution of this study is being able to provide empirical evidence that develops this conceptual model of HRD roles to crisis stages. Hutchins and Wang (2008) suggest that HRD is best placed to deliver wide-ranging CM practices that support CM goals in its role as *human capital developer* and when HRD acts in a strategic manner by harnessing and developing employees (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a).



**Table 2.3 Mapping Hutchins and Wang (2008) HRD roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages**

Mitroff (2005) Crisis Stage	HRD Role (Hutchins and Wang, 2008)	Description
Signal detection, preparation, containment, recovery, learning and redesign	Developer of human capital	To develop the productive capabilities of human beings to support CM goals
Redesign	Organisational problem finder	To design instructional programs to proactively deal with organisationally defined problems
Containment	Organisational change agent	To help people and organisations change unhelpful behaviours and practices
Recovery	Organisational designer	To diagnose and select the structure and formal system of communication, authority, and responsibility to achieve CM organisational goals
Containment	Organisational empowerer/meaning-maker	To transform people and organisation in order to foster learning through critical reflection

James and Wooten (2010) also identify that throughout the entire crisis continuum, HRD can play a role in the development of specific CM capabilities. Therefore, the role of *human capital developer* is shown as adding value throughout each of the crisis stages (signal detection to redesign). They also re-define Watkins (1989) *problem-solver role to problem-finder*, demonstrating a more proactive approach in sensing/scanning rather than simply responding to environmental problems. This environmental scanning is a key feature of not only the CM literature but as noted in section 2.6 the SHRD and DCs literature and is a key theme in this thesis. However, there has been limited empirical research that has investigated HRD environmental scanning in a crisis context. This is a gap in our understanding of how the crisis context might require different strategies and approaches that support environmental scanning compared to more ‘steady state’ environments.

In reviewing the HRD/CM roles literature, I have highlighted that previous authors have identified conceptually specific HRD roles that support CM goals within each crisis stages and used the Mitroff (2005) model to identify roles that deliver against specific CM goals. Table 2.4 below provides a summary of how a conceptual framework of HRD roles and crisis stages can be developed.

**Table 2.4 Mapping Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018; Hutchins and Wang (2008); HRD/CM roles to Mitroff (2005) CM stages**

<b>Crisis Stage (Mitroff, 2005)</b>	<b>CM Goal</b>	<b>HRD/CM Role (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018)</b>
Signal detection	Pro-active scanning of environments for threats	Mentor, human capability developer
Preparation	Develop CM capabilities in advance of crisis	Mentor, human capability developer
Containment	Focus on survival, lessen impact of crisis	Healer, organisational meaning-maker
Recovery	Redefine organisational purpose, develop new structures and processes	Renaissance man, organisational designer, change agent
No-fault learning	Embed learning	Human capability developer
Re-design	Reposition for growth	Problem finder

Investigating what other roles beyond those of the MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) and Hutchins and Wang’s (2008) adaptation of Watkins (1989) HRD roles would be useful in addressing this study’s research question. In reviewing the literature, a limitation is that the models presented are conceptual rather than being grounded in empirical data. Other gaps in knowledge and understanding relating to HRD roles in CM are whether certain roles are required simultaneously and what are the capabilities that HRD needs to develop in order to deliver these roles effectively in

the turbulent post-crisis context. By conducting an empirical study, gaps in the HRD role within CM debate can be addressed.

In summarising the previous two sections I have identified from the literature that metaphors are useful in understanding socially constructed phenomena such as crisis and HRD scholars have used metaphors as a lens to describe HRD value in CM. The study builds on this body of work by generating empirical research from organisational stakeholders including HR/D practitioners on how dynamic HRD roles explain HRD value in a post-crisis context.

In the final section of this chapter, I will review the existing CM/HRD literature that examines HRD roles within the post crisis stages. As part of the grounded theory approach, three specific crisis stages were included in the final theory: *'containment, recovery and renewal'*. The *'renewal'* stage combined Mitroff's (2005) 'No-fault learning' and 'Redesign' stages as the term *'renewal'* was used by participants to describe the journey out of the crisis.. In the next section I will review the literature that relates to HRD roles in the containment stage.

### **2.7.6 HRD roles in the containment stage**

In attempting to contain a crisis, the focus is on lessening the impact of the crisis and ensuring organisational survival (Bundy et al., 2017; Mitroff, 2005). In reviewing the literature, I have identified two HRD roles which support CM goals in the containment stage; *healer* and *organisational meaning-maker*.

Crises can create emotional reactions such as loss, shock, and denial (Mitroff, 2005; Roux Dufort, 2007; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). In adopting the *healer* role, Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018 suggest that HR/D is best placed to provide support for those most impacted by a crisis. Practices which support the healer role include effective internal communication, the ability to allow employee emotion to be appropriately expressed, provision of suitable support resources for those most impacted and a drive for authentic leadership. More recently, Dirani et al (2020) examined early responses to the COVID 19 pandemic and HRD requirements. They identified the need to provide emotional stability and provide for employee well-being as crucial leadership competencies. The use of storytelling to make sense of a crisis is also supported by Eray, 2018; Kopp et al., 2011). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence that helps us understand how storytelling is best utilised in the containment stage of a crisis.

Watkins' (1989) concept of HRD acting as an *organisational empowerer/meaning-maker* encourages the use of critical reflection within the organisation. Such reflection can be useful in a crisis context, forcing leaders to reflect on their own actions and behaviours and cease practicing unhelpful behaviours which might worsen the impact of the crisis. Gephart, (2007) argues that CM theory under-emphasises the political processes and power relationships inherent in the daily life of risk-managing organisations. Such processes will contribute to the construction of differing versions of reality during an emerging crisis event to serve particular group interests. Processes of organisational and cultural learning may often become disrupted or blocked as collateral damage to political infighting and organised cover-up (Kovoor-Misara and Nathan, 2000; Smith and Elliott, 2007,). At a time when the focus should be on organisational survival, a concern is that if leaders do not engage in critical reflection it can lead to the

development of defense mechanisms which include denial of reality, inattention to detail, attribution to others and defensiveness (Chebbi and Pundrich, 2015; Roux-Dufort, 2007; Smith and Elliott, 2007). The public enquiries that took place in the containment stage following the GFC show that senior leaders used a range of competing storylines to justify their behaviours (Whittle and Mueller, 2012) and also raises questions as to the impact of such inquiries on HRD provision which is an area this study will seek to address. Critical HRD has explored the role of power, politics and emotion in HRD (Gold and Bratton, 2014; Trehan and Rigg, 2011) with a recognition that HRD often operates in a highly political and compromised context with limited voice to challenge management (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012; Stewart et al., 2011). Empirical studies such as that from Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, (2015) are helpful in understanding stakeholder perspectives of the impact of the GFC on HRD practitioners. Their research identified that HRD was in danger of becoming invisible in the face of greater autocratic leadership and a culture of compliance, along with business needs aimed at wealth maximation initiatives (Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015, p.97). A further gap in our understanding relates to the critical position taken by MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery (2012) and Martin and Gollan (2012) who argue that HR and by extension HRD failed to act as the conscience of the organisation and helped contribute to conditions that caused the GFC to occur through failings relating to recruitment, reward, training and governance. If such a view was held by management, it could well have an impact on the ability of HRD to promote critical reflection with key stakeholders. Understanding how pre-crisis and post-crisis perceptions of HRD impact on HRD being able to operate as an *organisational meaning-maker* (Watkins, 1989) is an area that warrants further investigation.

Further research into how HRD practitioners manage critical issues with organisational stakeholders in the containment stage and the impact this might have on HRD supporting organisational CM goals would be useful. This study can provide empirical evidence that extends the knowledge and understanding of how HRD identifies these cultural barriers in the containment stage and secondly, what were the specific practices and roles undertaken by HRD to navigate such barriers. In the next section, I will review the literature as it relates to the HRD roles in the recovery stage.

### **2.7.7 HRD roles in the recovery Stage**

As an organisation moves into the recovery stage, the CM goals are to redefine organisational purpose and develop new structures and processes that embed the crisis learning. This stage is also characterised by a strong change agenda (Bundy et al., 2017, Mitroff, 2005). I have identified three HRD roles that support CM goals in the recovery stage: *renaissance man*, *change agent* and *organisational designer*.

By adopting the role of *renaissance man*, HRD can alter employees' perspectives from that of a traumatic incident, to one where the lessons can be used to inform future behaviour and build positive change (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Crises can be seen as an act of betrayal on behalf of the employer, with a knock-on effect on employee engagement Mitroff (2005, p.39). To readdress disengagement, the culture of an organisation, the philosophy and vision of its founders, and its foundational values are essential for its survival and revival following a critical event (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018, p.22). They suggest that HR/D can play a role in the rearticulation of organisational values to bring unity to the workforce that can be a driver for future

desired behaviour. Common values develop a powerful interactive bond between the HRD and its employees (Bates and Chen, 2005), This interface is of great importance, as it brings together employees with different cultures, morals, customs, languages, religions, and cultural backgrounds (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018, p.22). The public enquiries within the UK that took place post-crisis identify how most of the major UK banks were engaged in a process during the recovery stage of reviewing their core purpose, values and operating practices (Whittle and Mueller, 2012).

Hutchins and Wang (2008) suggest that HRD can adopt a *change agent* role in supporting CM objectives. Their view is supported by the empirical research of Mitsakis (2017) who observed that HRD practitioners should play a proactive role as change agents in the formation of a change-orientated culture as a defense mechanism to the constantly changing business and economic environments (2017, p292). Ghaderi, Som and Wang (2014) have used Wang's (2008) 'Freeze-Unfreeze' organisational CM change model to explore the relationship between organisational learning and change throughout the crisis lifecycle and Starbuck's, (2017) work based on several empirical longitudinal studies highlights the importance of un-learning when an organisation retains key management following a crisis. A benefit of Wang's (2008) work is that it integrates Mitroff's (2005) crisis model and attempts to illustrate the dynamics among CM, organisational learning, and change by explaining the nonlinear and interconnected nature among these three areas.

Wang (2008) contends that many organisations are ill-prepared to recognize a crisis or operate out of a false sense of security that it will not happen to them. As a result, such a reality and mentality call for unlearning as a key step in organisational CM (Starbuck,

2017). Unlearning is a process of abandoning the dominating ideas, disconfirming past programs, embracing new ideas, and engendering change (Nystrom and Starbuck, 2015; Starbuck, 2017). Before organisations try any new ideas, it is helpful for them to unlearn old ones by discovering their inadequacies and then discarding them (Nystrom and Starbuck, 2015). A further benefit of Wang's (2008) work is the conceptualisation of 'organisational memory' (2008, p.437) as an important enabler of any CM change process. James and Wooten (2010) in examining crisis as a result of discrimination lawsuits in the USA note that organisational behaviour is history-dependent, focusing on practices of the past rather than expectations of the future. Their research along with Wang (2008) argue that the preservation of organisational memory is important if learning and change is to be navigated successfully in the post-crisis context. Given the limited empirical evidence of Wang's (2008) work, it requires further research to understand how HRD can help in the unlearning process, whether this is required at different stages in the post-crisis context and what HRD practices are most useful in dealing with organisational memory lapses.

Applying Watkins (1989) *organisational designer* role to CM, Hutchins and Wang (2008) suggest that HRD can connect the organisation, the structure and the development of employees in the achievement of CM organisational goals. This can support in developing new processes and structures that promote more effective communication and decision-making to avoid silos and information difficulties (Coombs, 2007). Zagelmeyer and Gollan, (2012), argue that HR and by extension HRD is best placed to understand the weakness of pre-crisis structures and processes. Armed with this knowledge they can design more resilient organisational systems (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003). The benefit of firm knowledge (Gubbins and Garavan, 2009) is known



to help HRD make more strategic decisions that meet the needs of key stakeholders, however, the extent to which firm knowledge is an enabler for HRD value in a post-crisis context has not been investigated and is an area that this study seeks to address

Organisations that experience crisis are presented with an opportunity in the recovery stage to take stock, learn from their experience and apply this insight back into their practice in order to become more resilient to future crisis (James and Wooten, 2010). This stage in the crisis process is characterised by a drive to learn lessons that move beyond changes in processes, routines and policies to the place where beliefs and assumptions of management is challenged and changed (Smith, 2000).

A challenge for HRD in operating as an *organisational designer* post-crisis is to enable changes in process, routines and policies that demonstrate how the organisation has learnt crisis lessons (Toft and Reynolds, 2005; James and Wooten, 2010). This type of learning is referred to as Reactive Learning by James and Wooten (2010), where the focus is on corrective action rather than seeking to understand what caused the problem in the first place. Characteristics of organisational design that are most effective post-crisis consider issues such as culture, change, senior management mindset and dealing with latent pathogens such as system design issues within the organisation (Smith and Elliott, 2007; Turner and Pidgeon, 1997). A helpful distinction in post-crisis learning is offered by Toft and Reynolds (2005) who distinguish between passive learning (identifying lessons) and active learning (implementing changes), noting that the latter does not always follow the former.

However, there has been limited research on the precise role of HRD in shaping post-crisis implementation strategies (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009). The post-crisis context can be a political event with stakeholders protecting themselves from scapegoating, producing their own event narratives and being resistant to change (Smith and Elliott, 2007 p.526). Their empirical research is helpful in that it provides an understanding of barriers to learning in a crisis context which includes rigidity of beliefs, blame and scapegoating, lack of acceptance of outside perspectives and bounded mindsets. Their study didn't have a focus on how external environmental contexts such as regulation and public enquiries have an impact on any of these barriers and subsequent learning which is a contribution of this study in that it will provide insight into the role that external conditions such as regulation and government involvement play post-crisis. Furthermore, Smith and Elliott's (2007) research is located in the CM learning domain and does not provide understanding on the specific role that HRD might play in over-coming these barriers which is an area this study will seek to address.

### **2.7.8 HRD roles in the renewal Stage**

As an organisation moves into the renewal stage, the CM goals focus on embedding learning and repositioning the organisation for growth so that it can operate more resiliently (Bundy et al., 2017, Mitroff, 2005). Within the Mitroff (2005) model, this is shown as a feedback loop that ensures that crisis lessons are embedded and form part of the environmental scanning that take place in the pre-crisis signal detection phase. HRD can support these goals by adopting the *problem finder* and *human capability developer* roles.

In the context of a post-crisis environment Hutchins and Wang (2008) suggest that HRD practitioners would best serve organisational goals by moving from a *problem-solving* approach to one of *problem-finding*. The emphasis here is on HRD being pro-active in seeking out threats and opportunities within the external and internal environments and then developing HRD plans, practices and processes that promote competitive advantage. The CM literature is clear on the requirement that post-crisis organisations remain pro-active in how they scan environmental changes (both internal and external) and consistently apply this learning (Mitroff, 2005; Roux-Dufort, 2007). This view is also supported by the SHRD (Mitsakis, 2017) and DSHRDC (Garavan et al., 2016) literature. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence that provides an understanding of how HRD practitioners develop such environmental scanning capabilities to act effectively as a problem-finder.

The work of James and Wooten (2010) is helpful in understanding the competencies required by HRD to operate as a *problem-finder*. They examined 20 crisis events within organisations within the USA, identifying specific leadership competencies at each crisis stage. They highlight HRD practices that can include environmental scanning for opportunities and threats, developing CM policies and procedures, working with line management on operational issues and fostering a learning culture (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; James and Wooten, 2010). Whilst the research of James and Wooten (2010) is helpful, this study aims to develop on some of the limitations of their work by generating field-based data rather than using secondary data. Furthermore, this study will explain competencies that HRD practitioners needed to develop for themselves and the organisational HRD team in order to demonstrate HRD value. In failing to look at crisis competencies for the organisational HRD team, James and Wooten (2010)

overlooked a key stakeholder group namely HRD practitioners who are best placed to help build the organisational CM, competencies which is a gap that this study seeks to address.

In the renewal stage, HRD is also required to develop capabilities within the wider organisation in its role as *human capital developer*. The original definition of Watkins (1989) has a narrow focus on HRD having a strong bottom line approach to learning and development that returns economic value. However, others such as Hutchins and Wang (2008) and James and Wooten (2010) suggest that in a crisis context HRD needs to develop capabilities that align also with CM objectives. A central theme in this thesis is how HRD can add value in a dynamic context by developing dynamic capabilities (DCs) that are able to sense, seize and reconfigure according to environmental changes. In developing these DC's, HRD can draw on the work of Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer (2014) who have attempted to theoretically integrate both the CM and organisational learning literature and propose a Learning in Crisis (LiC) approach. They suggest a new mode of learning that moves beyond an event-based sequence perspective in favour of a dynamic process of practising. This is consistent with the re-design feedback loop that Mitroff (2005) suggests connecting post-crisis learning with the pre-crisis behaviours of signal detection. The LiC model is conceptual rather than empirically based and proposes 'learning-in-practice' which extends beyond reactive learning (James and Wooten, 2010) by introducing rehearsing, reviewing and refining practices to overcome psychological /psychodynamic, socio-cognitive and political learning barriers. LiC introduces new ways of learning by engage leaders in learning not only when in crisis but to engage in reflexive critique as part-and parcel of their everyday practice. Operating as a *human capability developer*, HRD can incorporate experimentation and

improvisation to develop a wider repertoire of learning practices and problem finding skills and the promotion of an emergent orientation which is similar to sense-making in HRO's (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005) and the sensing, seizing and reconfiguration capabilities as defined in the DCs literature (Teece, 1997; Garavan et al., 2016). In doing so, LiC highlights the overlapping nature of several areas of research, all essentially approaching the same phenomenon (identifying threats and opportunities and acting on these) but using different contexts as starting points. This could help explain why there has been a lack of theory in the area of capability development post-crisis. Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer (2014), acknowledge that adopting a LiC approach has certain limitations which include the 'psychodynamic vice' (2013, p.9) which explains how leaders who display narcissistic characteristics may be unwilling to listen or engage in perspectives that are not their own (Ford, 2006). A second challenge is that of 'socio-cognitive vice' (2013, p.11) which refers to how individuals explain and construct their own environment and draw conclusions (Weiner et al., 1983). Finally, LiC needs to consider what the authors refer to as the 'politics of success vice' (2013, p.120) which asserts that success narrows leaders' perspectives, changes their attributes and boosts overconfidence (Ranft and O'Neill, 2001). Acting as a *human capability developer*, HRD can provide a value-add role given the turbulent environments created by crisis, emphasising the importance of critical judgements as part of environmental scanning. However, given the lack of empirical research to support LiC there has been limited evidence to extend our understanding of which practices and routines are most effective and the role that HRD can play in developing these practices within the organization.

In the previous three sections I have integrated the Mitroff (2005) CM model with the HRD/CM role literature, reviewing the literature and highlighting that a lack of empirical research limits our understanding of HRD roles in the CM post-crisis stages of containment, recovery and renewal. In the final section will provide some concluding thoughts on the review of the literature.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have identified what we currently know in relation to the research question *“How do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish Banking sector”*. The empirical studies of stakeholder perceptions show that pre-crisis HR and by extension HRD influence was limited in the UK banking sector, with a particular requirement on HR practitioners possessing appropriate technical and professional knowledge to meet regulatory requirements and leveraging the use of metrics to make informed business decisions (Aldrich et al, 2015). This raises important questions for this study as to whether HRD possessed the relevant CM knowledge to support organisational management goals. Post-crisis, empirical studies show that the GFC effectively ‘back-footed’ HRD with the study of Mistakis and Aravapoulou (2016) providing perspectives from HR, management and employees on HRD value. Their work identifies issues of credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of organisational stakeholders regarding their HRD function and its members. It raises questions as to what stakeholder requirements in a post-crisis context are, and how these differ from more steady state contexts. Given the emotionally charged and highly politicised environments of a crisis, understanding if there is perception from organisational stakeholders that HR/HRD helped create conditions for the crisis to occur (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012) is an area that warrants further investigation.

What we currently know through the Mitsakis (2017, 2023) studies is that within two Greek banks, there was a perceived lack of SHRD maturity post GFC. The usefulness of the Mitsakis (2017, 2023) empirical research is twofold, firstly they engage the view of employees and managers in explaining HRD value which are stakeholder groups that can offer a different perspective than senior management and secondly, the development of the SHRD maturity framework clarifies the role of environmental scanning capabilities in dynamic contexts. The need for HRD practitioners to develop dynamic capabilities to be able to deal with changes in external and internal environments is identified through the DSHRDC framework (Garavan et al, 2016), and this study provides an opportunity to understand the role of DCs in supporting CM objectives.

In reviewing the HRD value literature, it is evident that the debate amongst academics continues with defining HRD value creation seen as an important challenge and opportunity for scholars and practitioners to enhance business performance (Alagaraja, 2013). I have argued that our understanding of HRD value in the crisis context is incomplete as there is a need to extend the existing debate beyond that of whether the focus is on organisational effectiveness, performance vs learning, the strategic role of HRD and whether HRD contributes to the overall success of an organisation (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). By integrating the SHRD maturity framework (Mitsakis, 2017) and the DSHRDC framework (Garavan et al., 2016), I have shown that HRD can add value as an environmentally integrated strategic partner.

An approach to gain a better understanding of HRD value can be through role metaphors which act as rich descriptors of HRD practices required in CM (Hutchins and Wang, 2008, Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). By using those role metaphors that are most widely cited in the literature, along with an event-based sequential perspective on crisis (Mitroff, 2005), the complexity of HRD practices required in a crisis context can be explained more easily. This can help address some of the concerns regarding HRD/CM research lacks agreed definitions or typologies and provides opportunities for further research. However, there is a lack of empirical research to extend these conceptual models of HRD/CM roles within each crisis stage.

In summary, I have identified several gaps related to what we know about stakeholder perceptions of HRD value in a post-crisis context. The specific knowledge, roles and associated CM practices that HRD needs to adopt to deliver value and the impact of environmental factors on this process. The next chapter will explain how the approach and design of the study addressed these gaps in the literature and answered the research question.



### **3 Chapter 3 Research methods**

In this chapter I describe the methods and research approaches I used to achieve the research aim of investigating HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish Banking sector. A qualitative approach was taken to develop theory from the experiences and knowledge of organisational members who had experienced the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). In particular, I applied a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) methodology, since no hypothesis was to be tested. The focus was primarily on stakeholder perspectives, and a constructivist approach allowed for greater recognition of my role as the researcher as a co-constructor of the research. This chapter presents the research design journey that was taken, along with discussions of the design choices I made.

The chapter is structured as follows. I will begin by stating my epistemological and ontological positions and how these influenced my choice in adopting a CGT approach and associated research design. I will then highlight the usefulness of grounded theory in building and elaborating on existing crisis management (CM) and HRD research and how this approach deals with some of the challenges associated with CM research.

I will then outline how I chose a CGT approach rather than the classic approach based on my epistemological position and the flexibility CGT afforded me in terms of my role as a researcher, the research process and final research product. The chapter will then focus on the procedures for selection of participants that experienced the phenomena under investigation, namely HRD value in a post-crisis context. The data generation section will describe the research design which consisted of two phases. Phase 1 saw 50 semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders who had experiences of HRD in a

post-crisis context within banking. Phase 2 allowed further data to be collected in a case study organisation which was a UK bank which had experienced significant impact from the GFC. Specific data analysis techniques of ‘memoing’, coding and theoretical sensitivity will be described, demonstrating how methodological rigour through procedural precision was achieved (Birks and Mills, 2015). The final section describes how good ethical protocol was maintained throughout the study.

One further research area that is integrated throughout the chapter, is reflexivity. GCT stresses the importance of researcher reflexivity given CGT supports the active contribution of the researcher in the research process and final product (Charmaz, 2014). Reflexivity has multiple levels including theoretical, methodological, ontological and emotional considerations (Haynes, 2012). Integrated throughout the chapter are insights and commentary on the techniques I used to remain reflexive throughout the study. The next section will describe my epistemological and ontological positions.

### **3.1 Research approach: ontological and epistemological considerations**

Any process of methodological engagement inevitably articulates and is constituted by an attachment to meta-theoretical commitments that have implications for research design (Duberley, Johnson and Casell, 2012). Within this study it is intended to maintain a constructivist-interpretive ontology (ie that the post-crisis context and associated crisis stages are phenomena that are constructed by individuals experiences of crisis; Bundy et al., 2017; Mitroff, 2005;), whilst also recognising a subjectivist epistemology (that perceptions of HRD value are largely subjectively and socially constructed, Alagaraja, 2013) In determining which approach to take when attempting

research Walsh et al.,(2015) caution that the researcher must take responsibility for gaining a clear understanding of the epistemological assumptions underlying their chosen methodology. The process of choosing the appropriate approach is a complex exercise which requires extensive reading and reflection. They go on to suggest it is not always possible to put a neat boundary around research approaches, but stress the importance of developing a reflexivity that takes into account the researcher's philosophical positions as a more useful practice to engage in. In arriving at my philosophical assumptions, I took into account the phenomena that I wanted to explore (HRD value), along with the context of that phenomena (post-crisis) and examined this against other metatheoretical approaches which will be discussed next.

Within the CM literature there has been a dominance of positivism as an underlying philosophy (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013). Positivism is concerned with focusing on directly observable phenomena and operates from the premise that there is an 'objective reality' that can be easily known and secondly that it is possible to remove subjective bias in the assessment of that reality (Keat and Urry, 2011). One of the challenges of positivism is a tendency to reduce human behaviour to simple stimuli and response and it is usually investigated through Popper's (1959) hypothetico-deductive method. This approach is limited, as it neglects to consider the subjective dimensions of human behaviour (Duberley, Johnson and Casell, 2012). However, it remains as a popular approach in mainstream management research, driven largely by ease of research design and the quest from academic journals to produce generalisable theory. The assumption that crises are amenable to positivist variance-based research and theoretical understanding is debatable as crisis are ambiguous, complex and socially constructed and therefore cannot be understood from one perspective (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013).

In their paper exploring crisis methodological innovations Buchanan and Denyer (2013) note the complexities that exist around the definition, classification and investigation of crises. They suggest that the discipline must allow realist-positivist *and* constructivist-interpretive ontologies to co-exist (2013, p.217). However, they do caution against the acceptance of a purely positivist epistemology as the basis that may limit the generation of fresh insights within the discipline. As a practitioner who had several years' experience working within the UK and Irish Banking sector, I was clear that the issues around HRD value could not be investigated adequately through an objective assessment given the impact crises has on individuals and the organisation.

Whilst some researchers might reject key aspects of positivism, they can maintain a commitment to objectively investigate human inter-subjective cultural processes by gathering facts from a readily observable world (Duberley, Johnson and Casell, 2012). This approach is referred to by some as neo-empiricism or qualitative positivism (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2017). To access context-free truth about reality, neo-positivists can benefit from the utility of qualitative interview research that follows a rigid research protocol (Alvesson,2003). However, one of the challenges in this study is that it is concerned with understanding 'how' HRD value was demonstrated post-crisis, reinforcing the need to acknowledge that context was important. This requires an approach which focuses on how individuals construct their understanding of the world through their experiences and how they interpret situations within specific contexts (Schwandt, 2007). Therefore, I concluded that a more appropriate philosophical approach to adopt is covered by what Prasad (2017) refers to as '*interpretivism*'. Essentially the interpretive tradition entails accessing and understanding the actual meanings and interpretations which actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena,

(Duberley, Johnson and Casell, 2012). Given these ontological and epistemological positions, I decided to adopt a grounded theory approach. Grounded Theory (GT) can be used to merge new observations with extant theory to facilitate new perspectives that better explain a given phenomenon. The following section will provide further explanation on my decision for adopting GT as an appropriate approach based on its usefulness in being able to explain the importance of context in investigating HRD value.

### **3.2 Grounded theory as relevant to the study**

GT is described as a systematic approach to data collection and analysis that was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960's. Since its inception in sociology and its subsequent migration to the fields of organisational and management research, GT has slowly developed to become a respected methodology within the organisational researcher's armoury (Kenealy, 2012). The underlying logic of GT is that it is emergent, with an aim to discover the theory implicit in the data rather than focus on hypothesis testing. GT methodology is based on the belief that as individuals within group environments comprehend events personally, common patterns of behaviour emerge (Glaser, 1998). Furthermore, GT is well suited to understanding the social processes and the consequently psychological effects inherent in organisational management dynamics in what is a seemingly chaotic environment. As such it is well suited to organisational sociology and psychology and time dependent behavioural enquiry such as the unit of investigation of this study, the post-crisis period (Glaser et al., 2013). It is particularly useful for research in areas that have not been previously studied, where there are gaps and where new perspectives could benefit areas for management involvement and organisational improvement (Murphy, Klotz and Kreiner, 2017). Examining the potential of GT within HRM research, Murphy, Klotz and Kreiner (2017) note that the

broader HRM field has lagged behind other management disciplines in adopting a GT approach. They support this view by highlighting that a review of over 200 articles published in the Academy of Management Journal that employed GT showed that only 10 focus on HR related topics. Their paper suggests several ways in which adopting a GT approach can support HR focused research which in turn informed my decision to adopt GT as a methodological approach. Primarily these revolved around the benefit of GT understanding the importance of the context of the phenomena under investigation and secondly the usefulness of GT in supporting theory elaboration and extension on extant theories within the broader HRD and CM field.

Regarding context within HRD, Devadas, Silong and Ismail (2011) note that there has been a requirement for fresh approaches to HRD research and argue that adopting GT approaches could be helpful when seeking to understand how context has an impact on HRD. Ferris et al, (1998) have criticised HR scholars for ignoring the role that context plays in most phenomena and Torraco (2004) also argues that the context of the study is important as well as the object when it comes to HRD research. Empirical studies referenced in section 2.8.1, also show the importance of context with the post-crisis context having an impact on investment into HRD (Horvath, 2010; Zavyalova, Kucherov, Tsybova, 2018), HRD legitimacy and credibility (Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016) and SHRD maturity (Mitsakis, 2017). Based on these considerations, I concluded that GT offered the most useful approach to understand how the context of the post-crisis period impacted on HRD value.

In addition, to help understand the context of HRD value, GT is known to be well suited to new, previously unaddressed research questions and provides a means through which researchers can build theory that represents how individuals experience developments within a field (Murphy, Klotz and Kreiner, 2017). Chapter 2 highlighted the gaps in the literature, identifying, that whilst there are some extant theories on HRD and CM such as SHRD within CM (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009), HRD and crisis change (Wang, 2008), HRD roles in crisis (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and Vouzas, (2018), these are limited in that they are conceptual frameworks only. GT allows researchers to extend existing theories that are useful but perhaps incomplete and is seen as one of the primary applications of grounded theory practice (Locke, 2000).

Having identified the benefits of adopting a GT approach I determined that a constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) rather than the classic grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1998) aligned more with my epistemological position and approach to the study. The next section will highlight my rationale for favouring the constructivist approach.

### **3.3 Rationale for adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach**

GT was first described in 1967 and continues to be an evolving methodology with a number of iterations, ongoing debates, discussion and controversies with many researchers strongly identifying with one or other side in these debates (O'Connor, Carpenter and Coughlan, 2018). A challenge for novice researchers attempting to distinguish between approaches in GT is that the research designs share many core features and procedures (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). When faced with the choice of classic or constructivist grounded theory, given that arguments could be credibly made

for both approaches, my choice was not based on a determination of which was the best approach but rather on which approach best positioned myself to be successful in fulfilling the research aims of investigating HRD value in a post-crisis context. This approach is encouraged by Heath and Cowley (2004) who suggest that qualitative research using GT is a cognitive process and that each individual has a different cognitive style. A person's way of thinking, and explanation of analysis, may seem crystal clear to someone with a similar cognitive style and very confusing to another person whose approach is different. Reflecting on my own experiences as I engaged with the GT literature, I found the work of O'Connor, Carpenter and Coughlan, (2018) helpful in outlining the similarities and differences between classic and constructivist theories. They suggest two distinct areas to focus on: epistemological position and the divergence on research process and product.

### **3.3.1 Epistemological differences between classic and constructivist approaches**

When considering the epistemological positions of classic theory, O'Connor, Netting and Thomas (2008) contended that the classic GT approach is based on positivist, objectivist assumptions while the constructivist approach *is based on interpretivist, subjectivist assumptions (p.42)*. Charmaz (2014) in describing the corresponding position for a constructivist approach argues that all knowledge is constructed, and that reality is fluid and subject to changes based on a participant's construction of it. A key emphasis from the constructivist perspective is that research findings are constructed rather than discovered. It assumes that the researcher is an active agent in that construction and, as such, his or her position, privileges and perspectives are acknowledged as impacting the construction of knowledge in the research process. As noted in the earlier section explaining my philosophical approach, this study



investigates various stakeholder perceptions of HRD value in a post-crisis context therefore the epistemological stance as outlined by Charmaz (2014) is more aligned with the overall research approach.

### **3.3.2 Research process and product**

There are several similarities between the processes and procedures used between both the classic and constructivist approaches such as constant comparison, memo writing, coding, theoretical sampling and an attention to theoretical sensitivity. These processes will be discussed in section 3.8 and 3.9 looking at Data Generation and Data Analysis. For now, this section will focus on explaining the methodological consequences that resulted in choosing a constructivist approach. There were three areas that were impacted, the role of the researcher, role of literature and interview techniques. These will be explored in further detail beginning with the role of the researcher.

### **3.3.3 Role of the researcher**

Within the CGT approach, the researcher is viewed as an active co-constructor of the final theory; whereas within the Classic GT approach, the aim is to minimize the impact of the researcher's preconceptions on the final theory through the application of essential grounded theory analytic processes. Through engagement with my supervisors and peers, I identified that I had experiences and observations relating to HRD value that would have been difficult to exclude from the final research product. The constructivist approach afforded me the opportunity to play an active role in the final theory development. Charmaz (2014) suggests that researchers should actively engage in strategies that reveal preconceptions by taking a reflexive stance whereas classic grounded theorists do not. Later sections on 'memoing' (3.9.1.2) will demonstrate how

the use of reflexive memo's supported the constructivist approach relating to my role as researcher in the research process.

### **3.3.4 Role of literature**

Evans (2013) summarized the differences between classic and constructivist approaches on the role of literature as follows; the starting point for a classic approach is a desire to explore a substantive area with no predetermined research questions prior to the study; it does not begin with a literature review. In contrast, a constructivist approach begins with a literature review as a means to establish what is known. Chapter 7 will explain how the theory development process was based on the integration between the findings from the data and the extant literature. In line with a constructivist approach, an initial literature review was conducted before data collection using the following keywords: *Crisis management and S/HRD, Crisis Learning, S/HRD Crisis Competencies, HRD Value, HRD Perceptions*. Given the requirements of Birkbeck College in the fulfilment of a PhD, it was necessary to complete various upgrade submissions and progress reports that required a level of literature review to take place before data collection which also informed my decision that the CGT approach to the role of literature aligned more closely with my own views and practical requirements.

### **3.3.5 Interview techniques**

In the social sciences, interviews have long been a central technique for developing knowledge and organisational studies (OS) is no exception (Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012). There are several benefits to using interviews in OS, namely, they are often more convenient, accessible and economical than other methods and have guidelines that ensure data is gathered in an ethical and credible fashion. Semi-structured interviews

can also generate detailed and insightful data for analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are also favoured as the best option to retrospectively gather participants' insights and delve into their perception of topics such as HRD value pre and post-crisis as demonstrated by the research of Mitsakis (2017, 2023). However, there are several challenges in using interviews given that they often deal with complex social processes. These include the need for the researcher to be aware of impression management and adopt a reflexist approach, along with concerns around lack of standardisation (Alvesson, 2011). Within GT both classic and constructivist approaches adopt similar guidelines on qualitative data collection methods, they adhere to two distinct strategies in preparing for interviews and in their stance on the question of devising an interview guide. Charmaz (2014) recommends that new researchers develop a detailed interview guide to enable them to gain clarity on the type of information they seek to address their research questions. The purpose of the guide is also to avoid the use of awkward, poorly judged questions potentially based on unexamined preconceptions (Charmaz, 2014, p. 63). Copies of the interview and focus group guides are included in Appendix C, F and I. I treated these as a living document as new themes were developed throughout the data collection process.

Having described my philosophical position and choice of research approach, the next section will describe the overall research design.

### **3.4 Research design**

The research took place in two phases. Phase one consisted of interviews with HR/D practitioners, external learning partner consultancies and senior leaders. There were fifty interviews in total with participants from 23 UK and Irish Banking institutions.

This phase allowed for a themes and core categories of HRD value in a post-crisis context to be developed from a range of organisations and stakeholders. Phase two of the study provided further data within the context of a case study organisation adding a ‘thick description’ of HRD value and helped explain differences from the phase 1 findings. Data collected from the case study organisation consisted of 6 interviews with HR/D practitioners and 9 interviews with senior leaders, in addition to this, supporting documentation relating to HRD programmes was reviewed and 2 focus groups were conducted with 17 participants made up from middle management and front-line staff. Table 3.1 below shows the research phase, method and data sources that were used to address the research aims.

**Table 3.1 Research methods and data sources**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Research Method</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
<i>One</i>	Semi-structured interviews	HRD practitioners (n-25) External Learning Partner Consultancies (n-5) Senior Leaders (n-20)
<i>Two</i> <i>Case Study</i>	Case study Organisation Semi-structured interviews Focus Groups Analysis of documents	HR/D practitioners Head of Talent etc (n-6) Senior leadership (n-9) Focus groups with middle management and front-line staff (2 groups comprising of 17 participants) Review of evaluation reports of programmes Review of organisational documentary evidence (pulse surveys, 360’s, leadership index etc)

The data was collected in late 2018 and throughout 2019, several years after the initial impact of the GFC. This meant that participants were in the renewal stage of the crisis continuum providing current data on the research question and retrospective data when

describing HRD value as it related to the containment and recovery stages. The timing of data collection supported the research question and objectives of investigating HRD value in a post-crisis context and the approach was based on two factors; practical and theoretical. With regard to practical, the timing for data collection was driven by the timelines of undertaking a part-time PhD, securing ethical approval and participation from individuals and the case study organisation. Regarding theoretical, crises are known to extend over time beyond just the triggering event (Buchanan and Denyer 2013; Deverell, 2010; Mitroff, 2005; Turner,1994). Collecting data several years after the initial GFC allowed for a wider 'slice of the crisis timeline' (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, p.209) to be investigated and the research design was developed using bridging strategies discussed in section 2.4.1 that link CM and mainstream literature (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). Such bridging strategies include the use of event-based sequence approaches along with the use of innovative research designs such as case studies (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013). They go onto suggest that event-based retrospective designs can help where the temporal structure of events can aid new insights and encourage researchers when it comes to crisis to 'consider the long-term with regards to data collection and explanation' (2013, p.215).

The use of case studies within crisis management has been supported by numerous authors (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; Bundy et al., 2017; Deverell, 2010). As Buchanan (2012) notes a case study is not a method but rather a research design and can involve a multi-methods design that incorporates quantitative and qualitative data. Case studies are the "preferred strategy when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed; when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context (Yin, 2009). In his study of

public sector organisational learning from crisis, Deverell (2010) notes that case studies are useful when the boundary between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, (2016) and Mitsakis, (2017) have also shown that the use of case studies is helpful in determining HRD value in a post-crisis context and were useful in determining the research design. The research design also supported the call for crisis research to provide explanatory models that are more temporal in nature by adopting an event-based sequence approach (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013).

Having described the rationale for the research design, in the next section I explain the process for participant selection for each phase of the research beginning with phase 1, the interviews with various stakeholders.

### **3.5 Research data: phase 1**

The research questions asked about subjective perceptions of the value of HRD in a post-crisis context. The data collected for the study was therefore qualitative in nature and came from interviewing HR/D practitioners, external learning partner consultancies, and senior management working within the UK and Irish Banking sector. The views of middle-management and front-line staff was collected in phase two via the case study to ensure that a range of stakeholder perspectives was captured. This section will explain in detail the methods for generating the data for phase one.

#### **3.5.1 Sample**

The criteria I applied to considering who should be interviewed used two guiding principles suggested by Alvesson and Ashcraft (2012): *Representativeness and Quality*.

The former refers to the need to have a selection of participants who adequately allow for coverage of the social category that will be explored and the latter refers to the ability of the participants to provide rich and insightful accounts. The initial inclusion criteria for participants in the sample was deliberately broad to include views from a range of HR/D practitioners and senior leaders across UK and Irish Banking Institution's. As a grounded theory study, this allowed for flexibility allowing new participants to participate as the research progressed whilst using theoretical sensitivity to steer the sampling process. For the purpose of this phase of the study I decided not to include the views of middle management or front-line staff (team leaders and customer facing staff). The literature highlights the disproportionate responsibility that senior management play in creating conditions for a crisis to occur (Smith and Elliott, 2007; Turner 1994). As a result, post-crisis, CM interventions typically focus on this level of leadership to drive cultural change and post-crisis learning (Smith and Elliott, 2007, Mitroff, 2005). Secondly, the overall research design used a triangulation of data sources; semi-structured interviews with a cohort of HR/D practitioners, a similar approach with senior leaders within banking and a case study of a UK Bank. Therefore, the views of middle management and front-line staff would be captured primarily through the case study. Thirdly, in his study Mitsakis (2017, p.302) notes that the views of senior executives was not permitted and suggests that future research should include their perspectives which is a contribution of the research design of this study. The sample for phase 1 was drawn from both the UK and Irish Banking sector. As noted in the introduction chapter, both countries had experienced similar effects of the GFC, with government aid being required for several institutions, along with an increased role for the regulator and prolonged government enquiries with significant media interest. Table 3.2 on the following page shows the details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria

to ensure the selection of participants recruited into the research sample was appropriate.

**Table 3.2 Selection criteria for phase 1 interviewees**

Criteria Details		Rationale
Inclusion Criteria  (semi-structured interviews)	HR/D practitioners and senior leaders who had been part of their organisation since before the GFC. Leaders would have experienced HRD in a 'business partner' capacity to support delivery of organisational objectives and recover from the crisis.	Crisis are known to be temporal and span across several stages (Mitroff, 2005). Therefore, it was important to understand if/when there were stages within the crisis cycle when HRD value was more evident.
Exclusion Criteria	Middle management and front-line staff.	Stakeholder perception regarding HRD value is known to vary by group (Bowen and Ostroff, 2016, Wang et al., 2020). The views of middle-management are explored in the case study. Access to senior leadership is a gap in existing empirical research (Mitsakis, 2017)
Exclusion Criteria	Staff who had not been with the organisation since before the GFC	The study was aimed at being temporal in nature, hence the importance of gaining perspectives from participants who had been with the organisation since the GFC

### 3.5.2 Phase 1: initial sampling

Participant recruitment began with a purposive sample of HR/D practitioners who were Head of Function or above. For senior leaders the focus was those in leadership within UK and Irish Banks who were seen by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), as being part of the *Senior Manager Conduct Regime* (SMCR). These are leaders who are seen as material risk takers. Recruitment began through the researcher's personal network of professional contacts with contact being made through email or LinkedIn as this provided the most practical route to begin data collection. The introductory message



gave a high-level view of the area of study along with the participant information sheet which is included in Appendix A. Once initial consent had been agreed, this was followed up with further details including contact details for the researcher and supervisor, individual consent form and details of the session (Appendix B). Additional participants were secured through snowball sampling with participants asked to make a referral via email or LinkedIn message. Given the seniority of participants, the scheduling of interviews mostly took place through their executive assistants, adding further complexity and time to the data collection with interviews having to be repeatedly rescheduled based on participants workloads.

### **3.5.3 Sampling**

GT does not start out with a pre-conceived sample size, with the aim being to quickly get to the point of saturation where no new categories are emerging from the collection of new data (Charmaz, 2014). GT studies should interview between 20-30 participants (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2012). Thompson (2010) in his review of over 100 GT studies found that the average size of a GT study was 25 with a range of 5 -114. In phase 1 of the study 50 participants took part. Section 3.8 will present how as part of the data analysis process I came to the decision that there was adequate theoretical sufficiency within phase 1 so that the research topic was sufficiently investigated.

Participants were initially identified and selected through ‘purposeful sampling’ where participants are selected because of their relevance to the research outcomes sought (Saunders and Townsend, 2018). Whilst sampling started purposively with HR/D and senior leaders across a range of business functions, theoretical sensitivity developed

during concurrent data analysis. Theoretical sensitivity is a core component of GT research and involves recognising what is important in the data, acknowledging the data's meaning in abstract terms and understanding conceptual relationships between patterns in the data (Charmaz 2014). As I developed sensitivity and increased awareness of key ideas emerging during data analysis, it became evident that Risk Management and the role of HRD in supporting a stronger risk agenda was an important theme. Further theoretical sampling of three Chief Risk Officers and one Senior Risk Manager allowed me to look for data that would inform the categories associated with regulation and compliance that had developed from previous interviews. Sampling then moved from purposive to theoretical which is an ongoing, iterative process of drawing from the analysis of previous data to guide decisions for how to continue with more data generation (Charmaz, 2014). With nearly half of the senior leader participants being C-Suite (CEO, COO, CRO, CMO), I felt that the perspectives of those at the most senior level to be expressed within the data.

A further example of developing theoretical sensitivity and theoretical sampling concerned the inclusion of external learning consultancies. I entered phase 1 without considering their input, however I choose to include them after a number of HRD practitioners shared that in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, they turned to external consultancies to help deliver HRD practices. The views from these participants added a richness to the data, highlighting that at the time the crisis occurred, HRD had a limited understanding of CM.

Additionally, it would have been beneficial to elicit Non-Executive Board members (NED's) views on the value of HRD, given the increased role they are required to play

in organisational governance. Despite a number of attempts, NED's were unwilling to participate due to the sensitivity of the subject matter attributed to the intense media attention that Banking has received in the aftermath of the GFC.

When the recruitment strategies were unsuccessful in finding NED's to include in the sample, I considered guidance on theoretical sampling and the CGT methodological literature (Charmaz 2012, 2014). It became apparent there was a need to be practical and pragmatic in accepting barriers outside of my control, such as a lack of response by board members to volunteer for the study. However, maintaining a robust, high-quality research process also requires authentically following the study design for data generation and not straying away from core GT methods. Whilst recognising that although NED's were missing from the sample, the data analysis and theory development successfully progressed by using other theoretically sampled data to explain relationships between emerging concepts and fill out properties within categories to the point of theoretical sufficiency.

### 3.5.4 Summary of participants

There were 50 participants in the final sample with a personalised number allocated to anonymise each person's identity which will be used when presenting the findings.

Tables 3.3-3.5 shows the breakdown of the phase 1 participants.

**Table 3.3 Phase 1 external learning partner consultancy participants**

ELP 01	Principal Consultant	UK
ELP 02	Managing Director	Ireland
ELP 03	Managing Director	Ireland
ELP 04	Principal Consultant	UK
ELP 05	Managing Consultant	UK

**Table 3.4 Phase 1 HR/D participants**

	<b>Business Function</b>	<b>Territory</b>
HRD 01	Head of Learning & Development	Ireland
HRD 02	Head of Learning & Development	UK
HRD 03	Senior Mgr Talent	UK
HRD 04	Head of Organisational Effectiveness	UK
HRD 05	Senior HRD Business Partner	UK
HRD 06	Chief People Officer	Ireland
HRD 07	Head of Organisational Development	UK
HRD 08	Senior Mgr Organisational Effectiveness	UK
HRD 09	Senior Mgr Learning & Culture	UK
HRD 10	Director Talent & Development	Ireland
HRD 11	Senior HRD Business Partner	UK
HRD 12	Head of Development	UK
HRD 13	Senior Manager Talent	Ireland
HRD 14	Senior HRD Business Partner	UK
HRD 15	Head of Learning & Development	UK
HRD 16	Head of Learning & Development	UK
HRD 17	Senior Manager Organisational Development	UK
HRD 18	Head of Organisational Effectiveness	UK
HRD 19	Head of Talent Development	UK
HRD 20	Head of Learning & Development	UK
HRD 21	Chief People Officer	Ireland
HRD 22	Head of Organisational Development	UK
HRD 23	Chief HRD Director	UK
HRD 24	Head of Organisational Effectiveness	Ireland
HRD 25	Senior Manager Talent Development	Ireland

**Table 3.5 Phase 1 senior leader participants**

	<b>Business Function</b>	<b>Territory</b>
Snr Mgr 01	Head of Risk and Compliance	UK
Snr Mgr 02	Chief Marketing Officer	Ireland
Snr Mgr 03	Head of Branch Banking	Ireland
Snr Mgr 04	Chief Operating Officer	Ireland
Snr Mgr 05	Chief Risk Officer	UK
Snr Mgr 06	Chief Executive Officer	Ireland
Snr Mgr 07	Chief Risk Officer	UK
Snr Mgr 08	Chief Operating Officer	Ireland
Snr Mgr 09	Managing Director Commercial	UK
Snr Mgr 10	Chief Risk Officer	UK
Snr Mgr 11	Managing Director Retail Bank	UK
Snr Mgr 12	Managing Director Commercial	Ireland
Snr Mgr 13	Chief Executive Officer	UK
Snr Mgr 14	Managing Director Commercial	UK
Snr Mgr 15	Chief Risk Officer	UK
Snr Mgr 16	Managing Director Commercial	UK
Snr Mgr 17	Managing Director Retail Bank	UK
Snr Mgr 18	Head of Marketing & Comms	UK
Snr Mgr 19	Head of Product	Ireland
Snr Mgr 20	Head of Strategy & Innovation	Ireland

### **3.6 Research data phase 2: BankCo case study**

Having generated data from over 50 participants from 23 UK and Irish Banking organisations, the inclusion of a case study (referred to as BankCo) provided further methodological rigour to the contribution of this study. It also allowed the views of middle management and front-line staff to be gathered through two focus groups along with further interviews with 6 HR/D practitioners and 9 senior leaders. I saw the inclusion of a case study as a means to provide a consistent context that allowed for a more in-depth analysis within a single organisation of the differences that had been present in the data collected from phase 1. Access was also given to a limited number of HRD documents relating to evaluation of HRD programmes, various organisational

leadership and cultural surveys. These documents helped to triangulate themes that developed from interviews with participants and also helped me understand the BankCo context more comprehensively.

### **3.6.1 Case selection**

Once the research questions have been identified and a case study design deemed appropriate, the researcher needs to address the issue of case selection (Buchanan, 2012). A key criteria for selection is that the case study should be able to provide evidence of the phenomena under investigation. The organisation was a UK Bank with several thousand staff comprised of business units covering retail, private, commercial and investment products. As a result of the crisis, it had gone through a process of recapitalisation and extensive restructuring for several years including changes at the senior management level. To protect the identity of the BankCo, specific details on HR practices such as spend etc is not provided, however the organisation has been recognised for its HR practices post-crisis and within the HRD team, it had received several training awards for its approach to developing group-wide leadership and culture programmes. Deverell (2010) suggests that case studies within the crisis management field should be selected on the basis of two related research ventures: practical and theoretical considerations. The latter point has been discussed above in how the BankCo would allow adequate investigation of HRD value given its extensive and on-going commitment to HRD practices. In regard to the practical, the choice of the organisation for this study was based on a degree of opportunism based on my role as a practitioner. Buchanan (2012) notes that often case studies can be ‘self-selecting’, emerging from opportunities and evidence. I had previously worked with the Group HR Director and when approached, they were willing to grant access to the organisation. I had hoped to secure a second case study organisation within the Irish context to see if

there were differences between UK and Ireland however attempts to secure access were unsuccessful within the time constraints of the PhD study.

### 3.6.2 Participant selection and research process

Participants were selected based on criteria set out in Table 3.6 below. This was shared with my point of contact within the organisation who then communicated with the prospective individuals inviting them to participate in the research, sharing with them the appropriate information and consent forms (Appendix D, E, G, H). Only one MD declined to participate in the study.

**Table 3.6 Selection criteria for phase 2 interviewees**

Criteria Details		Rationale
Inclusion Criteria (semi-structured interviews)	HR/D practitioners and senior leaders who had been part of their organisation before the GFC. Leaders would have experienced HRD in a 'business partner' capacity to support delivery of organisational objectives and recover from the crisis.	Crisis are known to be temporal & span across several stages (Mitroff, 2005). Therefore, it was important to understand if/when there were stages within the crisis cycle when HRD value proposition was more evident.
Inclusion Criteria (focus groups)	Middle Management and front-line staff.	Stakeholder perception regarding HRD value is known to vary by group (Bowen and Ostroff, 2016, Wang et al., 2020).  Understanding HRD as it was perceived from middle management and front-line staff could provide further insights from the Phase 1 data.
Exclusion Criteria	Staff who had not been with the organisation since the GFC	By phase 2, the study had identified the importance of crisis stages and the importance of understanding HRD from the initial on-set of the crisis up to present day

I decided to use focus groups as a means of collecting data from middle management and front-line staff as they can work particularly well when researchers are trying to

explore people's feelings and experiences in more depth, than can be obtained from a survey (Kandola, 2012). Focus groups can also help to determine the mood or climate of a particular topic. I was advised by the point of contact within the organisation that it would not be possible to conduct focus groups with senior stakeholders given the logistical challenges of scheduling. Given the time constraints of the access window I was granted within the organisation I decided that the most practical use of my time was to conduct interviews with senior stakeholders and then use focus groups with middle management and front-line staff. Two focus groups were conducted on-site with a split of 9 and 8 in each group. With my point of contact we had anticipated last-minute dropouts so had issued invites to 10 participants for each group. I developed a topic guide (Appendix I) that focused on covered 4 themes that had developed from the data at this point in the study; *impact of the crisis on HRD, strategic aspect of HRD, organisational learning and the role of organisational purpose*. Given the limited time of 60 minutes per group I asked participants to work in pairs to answer specific questions and then had them feedback their answers which were noted and collated (Appendix L for an example). This approach is suggested by Kandola (2012) as a means to ensure group participation and avoid conversations being dominated by stronger individuals. Participants were then asked to provide specific examples beyond what were shared from the pairs exercise, and I made sure to repeat back what individuals had shared so that their comments could be captured accurately. The BankCo point of contact had expressed reservations of recording the focus groups as they felt it would have potentially restricted conversation and required more sign-off in the organisation which could have resulted in longer delays in the data collection. As a compromise, the session host acted as a scribe ensuring that there was a triangulation of my own extensive notes both during and after the session, those of the host and then the detailed answers from the pairs. With both sessions, 60 minutes went quickly, and participants



were well engaged and co-operative. At the end, I asked that if other topics came to mind that participants could email me, which a number did providing clarification on specific points particularly regarding the amount of mandatory training and the difference in learning provision from the containment to the recovery stage. Several participants remained after each session was over, providing further insights which I transcribed immediately and checked for verification whilst they were present and agreed their permission to be included in the study. Tables 3.7-3.9 show the phase 2 participants with unique identifier references to anonymise each person's identity.

**Table 3.7 Phase 2 senior leader participants**

	<b>Business Function</b>	<b>Territory</b>
CS 01	Divisional CEO	UK
CS 02	Head of Risk & Compliance	UK
CS 03	Head of Finance	UK
CS 04	Head of Product	UK
CS 05	Head of Strategy	UK
CS 06	Divisional CEO	UK
CS 07	Head of Finance	UK
CS 08	Divisional CEO	UK
CS 09	Head of Current Accounts	UK

**Table 3.8 Phase 2 HR/D participants**

	<b>Business Function</b>	<b>Territory</b>
CSHRD 01	Head of Learning & Development	UK
CSHRD 02	Head of Talent Development	UK
CSHRD 03	Divisional Head of People	UK
CSHRD 04	Head of Leadership Development	UK
CSHRD 05	Senior Manager HRD Business Partner	UK
CSHRD 06	Head of Performance	UK

**Table 3.9 Phase 2 focus group participants**

	<b>Business Function</b>	<b>Territory</b>
CSFG01	Business Development Mgr Retail	UK
CSFG02	Legal & Regulatory Affairs, Mgr	UK
CSFG03	Senior Personal Banker, Retail	UK
CSFG04	Learning and Development, Mgr	UK
CSFG05	Client Manager, Commercial	UK
CSFG06	Team leader Communications	UK
CSFG07	Team leader, Technology	UK
CSFG08	Senior Personal Banker, Retail	UK
CSFG09	Business Analyst, Technology	UK
CSFG10	HR Specialist, Reward	UK
CSFG11	Team Leader, Finance	UK
CSFG12	Mortgage Advisor, Retail	UK
CSFG13	Team Leader, Credit Risk	UK
CSFG14	Customer Service Representative, Retail	UK
CSFG15	Business Analyst, Commercial	UK
CSFG16	Team Leader, Finance	UK
CSFG17	Customer Service Representative, Retail	UK

### **3.7 Difficulties encountered during data collection**

Throughout the data collection in phase 1 and 2, there were several issues that as a novice researcher I needed to navigate. As mentioned earlier, I was fortunate to get access to senior stakeholders. However, a resulting impact was the continual rescheduling of interviews which extended the data collection stage beyond what I was originally intending. I conducted several interviews outside of normal working hours as this was the only time that was available for specific leaders that I wanted to participate in the study. In phase 1, I started out with the original intent of interviewing NED's as a key organisational stakeholder, however despite several attempts I was unable to secure access to this group. In securing a case study, I had to engage with numerous stakeholders beyond my initial sponsor to ensure that they were comfortable with the aims and objectives which caused some delays in my data collection. Ultimately within

the time constraints of my PhD, I was unable to secure an Irish case study which could have provided an interesting perspective on differences between the UK and Irish sectors. Within the BankCo there were challenges around management of the focus groups with a reluctance to record the session. As described in the previous section, I was able to work constructively with my sponsor to ensure that we had a robust process in place to capture participant's feedback.

### **3.8 Summary: research design (phase 1 and 2)**

In this section I have described how the research design adopted two 'bridging strategies' that are helpful in integrating CM within mainstream management research (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). To ensure that the research question of investigating HRD value in the post-crisis context could be adequately explored data were collected several years after the GFC, thereby allowing a wider 'slice of the crisis timeline' to be examined (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, p.209). In adopting a second bridging strategy (a case study), I was influenced by the use of case studies within the crisis literature, as well as the success of more recent studies that adopted a case study approach that described HRD value in a post-crisis context (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). The study was divided into two phases, with Phase 1 consisting of semi-structured interviews with 50 HR/D practitioners, external learning partners and senior leaders. During phase 1, my sensitivity to the data resulted in theoretical sampling that looked for data that would inform categories such as regulation and external learning partners. Phase 1 allowed for key themes and categories to be developed which was further expanded on within a case study organisation through 15 interviews with HR/D practitioners and senior leaders. The use of two focus groups with 17 participants facilitated the views of middle management and front-line staff to also be gathered.

In the next section I explain the process by which I generated data and how I determined that I had reached theoretical saturation.

### **3.9 Data generation**

Congruent with a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014), in-depth, semi-structured interviewing to collect qualitative data served as the primary method. The in-depth interviews explored the participants' interpretation of HRD's value proposition by asking open-ended, non-judgemental questions. For instance, these questions illustrate the interviewing style used with further details of the initial interview guides for each phase found in Appendix C, F and I:

*To what extent (if any) does HRD play a strategic role within your organisation? Are there ways in which HRD has supported the organisation post-crisis? How has the organisation learnt post-crisis?*

As the researcher, I was the data collection 'instrument' with each interview acting as a social interaction between myself and the participants. A pilot interview was initially considered but then intentionally not completed as it was not compatible with the research methodology and methods. By taking a CGT approach, I would have been influenced by emerging concepts, even during a practice pilot interview (Charmaz 2016). Furthermore, the dynamic with the interviewee is not repeatable due to time, context and conditions altering in each encounter. A semi-structured interview agenda had been prepared though, to provide a starting point for questions as the majority of executive assistants had asked for some pre-briefing questions to be shared in advance

with their leaders, (see Appendix J) for an example of what was shared with participants). A feature of CGT is that by following up on codes as the study progressed, I was able to develop more pointed questions based on categories that developed from the data which participants may not have anticipated as important. This process allowed me to test tentative analytic categories against the data or see if there were other social processes going on. Questions and explanatory probes were adjusted throughout the interview to clarify, expand and enhance the concurrent data analysis occurring within the interview time itself. Appendix C ,F and I specifies a list of phrases planned to probe further, including these examples:

*Please say more about \_\_\_\_\_. Could you give me an example of \_\_\_\_\_?*

*How does \_\_\_\_\_ happen? Where does it happen? When does it happen?*

The interview agenda, questions and exploratory probes followed guidance by Bryman (2012) and Charmaz (2014) to draw out the participants' perspective of definitions, situations, events, main concerns, assumptions, implicit meanings and tacit intuition. Thus, the interviews were informed by CGT principles to explore the symbolic meaning and social interactions influencing the participant's views of the value of HRD in a post-crisis context.

The interviews took place as a telephone call at a time of convenience for the participant. Online interviewing, using video calling technology, would have been preferred as it allows for both non-verbal and verbal communication to be noted

(Salmons, 2014). However, participants informed the researcher that internal security restrictions prevented the use of such technology given that the data collection took place before video technology became commonplace as a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Telephone interviews lost the advantage of non-verbal communication, but I reflected that this did not limit data analysis. Telephone interviewing was not restricted by geography, allowed for a higher number of people to receive the study invitation and was aligned with the sustainability agenda of minimising excess travel (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). Table 3.10 on the following page provides an overview of the strategies used to promote the effectiveness of using telephone interviews for interviewing. All telephone interviews were scheduled during normal working hours for ease of scheduling purposes as these were made through participants' executive assistants. I actively tried to establish rapport during the interview introduction time and continually evaluated the influence of verbal communication during each interview to overcome any potential discomfort from participants. The interview discussions were recorded with a digital voice recorder and directly transcribed by a third-party transcription service provider.

**Table 3.10 Telephone interview strategies (Charmaz, 2014)**

Telephone Interviews (Charmaz, 2014)	Strategies for this Study
How will distractions in the physical setting be kept to a minimum?	I ensured that I was alone in a quiet room to ensure there was privacy and no extra noise added to the interview recording. The participants were asked to position themselves in a physical setting where they felt comfortable with minimal distractions.

<p>Will participants be comfortable in a telephone interview?</p>	<p>An introduction period reviewed the participant information sheet, re-validated consent and explained the process of the interview. This initial time helped the interviewee to settle into the telephone medium and established a rapport with the researcher before recording started for the data collection. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions before the interview began, they were reassured questions could be asked at any point and I closed by asking participants if they have any questions for the researcher.</p>
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### 3.9.1 Theoretical saturation

In phase 1, a pause in sampling and data collection happened after the interviews with 50 participants. At that time, the data analysis and level of abstraction had progressed to the point where the following core categories explaining the value proposition of HRD had emerged, namely; *Macro Environment (Regulatory landscape)*, *Micro Environments (Crisis Stages, HRD Investment)* along with *8 Dynamic HRD Roles such as HRD Voice, Healer and Provocateur*. In phase 2, data generation concluded after the 15 interviews and 2 focus groups when I determined that there was adequate in-depth data that supported and augmented the core categories developed from phase 1 and that there were no new properties developing within the data.

In reaching the decision to pause further data collection I was guided (and reassured) by other grounded theorists who suggest that the issue of deciding when ‘enough is enough’ is a complex one, especially for novice researchers (Nagel et al., 2015). Theoretical saturation in CGT is described as the time when data collection for a category does not demonstrate any new properties or theoretical insights, and there is convincing, robust, dense data with adequate depth and scope to substantiate the

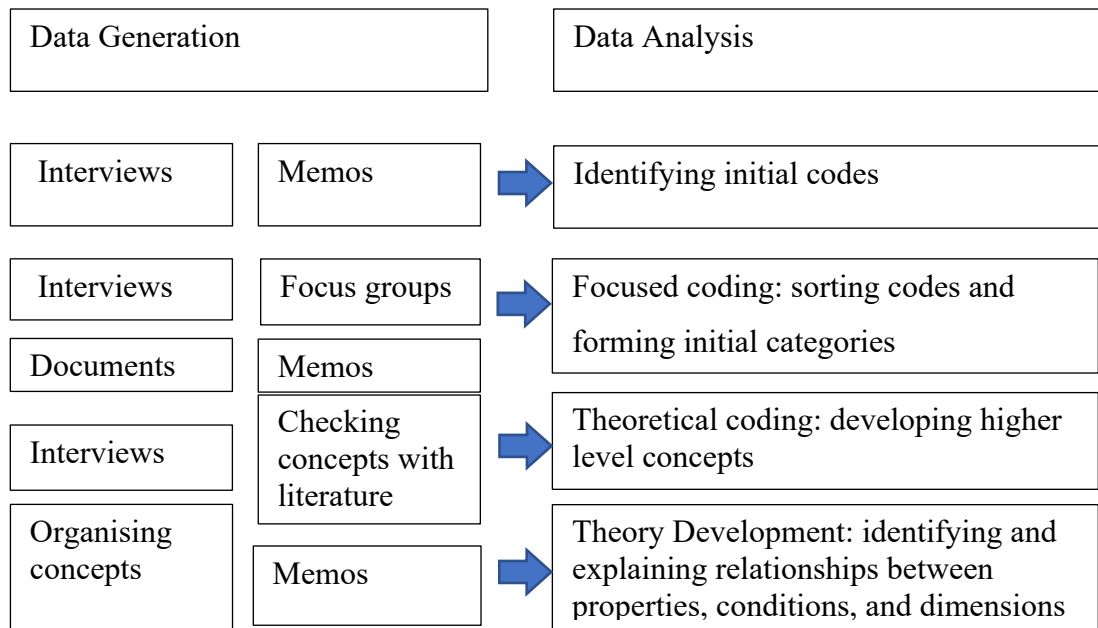
theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). The phrase theoretical saturation was called an ‘unfortunate metaphor’ by Dey (1999, p.257) and a ‘misleading metaphorical picture’ by Nelson (2017, p.556) because the connotation of the term saturation suggests absolute fullness and completeness with no room for additions. Charmaz (2014) also recognised a theory might not ever be fully exhaustive because contexts and conditions change over time, subjective interpretation of new ideas could lead to further development of the theory, and it may not be feasible for the researcher to know absolutely everything about the researched phenomenon. Consequently, Charmaz (2014, p.213) recommended researchers consider saturation as theoretical sufficiency when “*you have defined, checked and explained relationships between categories and the range of variation within and between your categories*”. Initial dissemination of the substantive theory occurs once the researcher has an adequate amount of data for ‘some’ level of theoretical sufficiency. For instance, the researcher can justify theoretical sufficiency if there is evidence of ‘conceptual depth’ within the central organising phenomenon and any other major categories of the theory (Dey, 1999). Rather than a static moment in time though, theoretical sufficiency continues as a developing process if new, emergent perspectives offer further insight to enrich and expand the explanation of category properties (Constantinou, Georgiou and Perdikogianni, 2017). Theoretical sufficiency thereby becomes ‘an ongoing, cumulative judgment that one makes, and perhaps never completes, rather than something that can be pinpointed at a specific juncture’ (Saunders et al., 2018, p.1901). Therefore, this thesis, offers an initial presentation of the ‘theoretical essence’ (Breckenridge et al., 2012) of the perception of the value proposition of HRD in a post-crisis context, based upon data from the participants.



In this section I have described how the data was generated for phase 1 and phase 2 of the study and how theoretical sufficiency was reached. I will describe in the next section how I conducted the data analysis in line with a CGT approach.

### 3.10 Data analysis

The iterative process of interviewing and focus groups alongside concurrent data analysis, leading to theoretical coding and theoretical sufficiency, is summarised in Figure 3.1 below.



**Figure 3-1 Process of data collection and analysis**

Excerpts of data and introduction of concepts within the substantive theory are included in this section in order to be transparent about ‘how’ the theory emerged from the data analysis. The full findings to illustrate ‘what’ the theory is are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 with an explanation of how the theory was developed in Chapter 7. A critical

discussion of the theory and its contribution to the literature will be provided in Chapter 8.

As previously noted, GT allows for iterative cycles of data collection and analysis to enable theoretical ideas to be refined, which then guided further theoretical sampling. The constant comparison method of data analysis identified increasingly abstract ideas by continually comparing data through sequentially increasing levels of abstraction. This constant comparison method, originating from Glaser and Strauss (2017), is a fundamental aspect of all GT approaches because it ensures systematic development of an abstract conceptual framework moving beyond a descriptive account of the data (Birks and Mills, 2015). Specifically, the constant comparison method involved comparing new data with existing data, codes with data, codes with codes, codes with categories, categories with categories, categories with concepts and concepts with extant theories in the literature. A grounded theory tool that I found useful in analysing the data was the extensive use of memos.

### **3.10.1 Memos**

Memos facilitated the theorising and writing up of ideas around the substantive codes as they developed during the data collection, coding and analysis (Glaser, 1998). I regarded memos as important since they provided a trustworthy and credible step-by-step record of the theory building process. ‘Memoing’ occurred during all stages of the study to capture my thoughts, feelings, reflections, and insights throughout the research process (Birks and Mills, 2015). Birks, Chapman and Francis’ (2008) mnemonic MEMO, summarises the reasons for memoing in grounded theory research: **M**apping

research practices, **E**xtracting meaning from data, **M**aintaining momentum and **O**pening communication. As advised by Charmaz (2014), memos were spontaneous, raw and unedited writing to allow creative freedom while analysing the data. By memoing frequently, it allowed me to stay connected to the data, to sustain active involvement with the data analysis and to maintain momentum throughout the study. Ideas were written in a memo as soon as they surfaced without any restrictions or hesitancy. This free exploration of ideas allowed me to take risks within the thinking, safely expressed in a memo. Memoing also released me from what Birks and Mills (2015) call ‘analytic paralysis’ through continual writing to push through any blocks in thinking. I used three types of memo throughout the study: operational, reflective, and theoretical. The collection of memos showed the progression of theory generation across the timeframe of the research study. Memos are presented in a box to delineate them from the rest of the thesis. They are written in the first person to demonstrate the freely expressed, creative and analytical thinking at that point of the study. Presenting memos as raw, unedited data contributes to the audit trail of evidence that the substantive theory developed from and is grounded in the data (Birks, Chapman and Francis, 2008). Examples of operational, reflexive and theoretical memos are provided in each of the following sections.

### **3.10.1.1 Operational memos**

An audit trail table of operational memos was kept, mapped out the research practices. Each operational memo was a dated, descriptive, brief comment to describe research practices. There was additional reflection and analysis if the action involved key decision-making or breakthroughs with the abstraction of significant concepts and theory generation. The purpose of this audit trail table was to provide an overview of

the research project, to capture learning events and networking as a developing researcher and to organise the operational memos. If an operational memo prompted other more reflective, analytical or theoretical memos, a note in the final column of the audit trail table facilitated a cross-referencing system (see Table 3.11 below). An operational memo about a meeting with my supervisors noted key points for the audit trail, but more extensive notes provided an extended memo about the meeting. This table is not the full audit trail for the research project, or all operational memos during the March 2019 - December 2019 timeframe. These practices were selected to show a range of operational memo examples and to illustrate how the audit trail listed operational memos as rows in a table and cross-referenced to other memos in the final column.

**Table 3.11 Operational memos**

<b>Audit trail of practices</b>	<b>Operational Memo describing the activity</b>	<b>Links to other memos</b>
Supervision Mtg 10/03/19	Update of senior manager cohort themes given the number of related themes from HR/D practitioners cohort.	
Operational Snr Mgr 02 20/08/19	Interview complete. Participant has asked for info sheet to be emailed to pass onto other potential participants in Irish Banking sector. Recording sent for transcribing.	SL02 Memo 20/08/19 (Sense of ownership)
15/10/19 Birkbeck Qual Group	Qualitative group working session. Hearing other's approaches leads me to reflect on bringing some further critique to my rationale for adopting a grounded theory approach. Connect to Blue Sky/Black Box HRM paper	
22/11/19	Whilst HRD talk about supporting the organisation to get into a ready state for change Snr Mgr 07 perceptions differ in that they see HRD role as being driving down cost through supporting in redundancies.	SL07 Memo 07/11/19 Link to Kebble-Ramsay (2015) work

### **3.10.1.2 Reflective memos**

Reflective memos were written within a research journal while reflecting on the practice

of conducting a CGT study and my own professional development. Box 1 provides an example of a reflective memo when I was considering my relativist perspective for the research and the implications for reflexivity within the constructivist approach. Memos provided an opportunity for me to manage my own previous experiences and bias reflexively and to be transparent in documenting this.

#### Box 1 Reflective memo: reflecting on relativist positioning

I've had to do a lot of thinking and reflecting on my ontological positions when it has come to this study. What started out a (long) time ago, attempting to conduct an objective, realist experiment of post-crisis learning, has now morphed into an interpretive constructivist study, looking at stakeholder perceptions of HRD. As a practitioner, it has caused me to think afresh about how I have strived to provide evidence for learning to have taken place in a very positivist approach. I need to remain open in my research to not try & 'shoe-horn' existing theories into my data but be aware of the role that I play in the overall research project.

I used a third-party transcription service for the majority of the interviews in order to speed up the process of initial and focused coding as there was a defined window in which to conduct the interviews based on organisational re-structures and some participants moving on from their roles. I made sure to take time to listen to the audio recording whilst coding to consider other factors such as 'how' participants spoke regarding emphasis, speed, tone, timing and pauses. Other contextual features assessed were demographic information of the participant, setting of the interview and timing of the interview and organisational context. For example, the memo in Box 2 evaluated the impact of the organisational context when the participant was about to embark on a re-structure within his department.

## Box 2 Reflective memo: organisational context of interview timing

I've just completed an interview with SL16. He informed me that he is about to embark on his eleventh round of redundancies within his organisation. I think the timing of the interview had an impact on what he shared. Several times, he made reference to a 'Dunkirk Spirit' within the leadership group in his business. It seemed at times that he was trying to convince himself that everything was going to be all right, yet that did not come across in the interview. The theme of leaders having to deal with the 'trauma' of their reports getting news on redundancy emerged as a theme, along with a view that 'leaders support leaders'. The 'temporal' element of what crisis stage an organisation is in, was reinforced in his responses and has an impact on how HRD is viewed as providing value add.

### 3.10.1.3 Theoretical memos

Theoretical memos prompted uninhibited exploration, conceptualisation and abstraction of the data and were used as conceptual levers to open new insight and possibilities of meaning in the concepts developed during data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). A conceptual lever was a notion taken from literature or personal experience which was not forced onto the data, but 'tried out' as the potential language for explaining the data (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). For example, the memo in Box 3 *Conceptualising abstract ideas* demonstrates how I borrowed the term '*HRD Voice*', from the literature (Garavan, 2007; Holbeche, 2009; Mitsakis, 2017) after the category of *HRD Voice* developed as a significant concept in the data and as I became sensitised towards ideas related to HRD's ability to shape and influence organisational goals and strategy.

## Box 3 Theoretical memo: conceptualising abstract ideas

Theoretical memo: HRD Voice

(Initial Code (IC)107) Participants saw HRD role as largely silent in initially supporting post-crisis practices at a strategic level. The view being that this was driven from the top-down & they were simply the administrators of a strategic agenda. Connects to IC100 *HRD agenda not strategically aligned* & IC106 *HRD being passive* and IC106(B) *HRD being invisible*— Again interesting that this is counter to HRDs view (IC080) that the *crisis allowed HRD to find its voice* & have a license to operate especially with the *conduct risk mandate* (088) & *drive to change culture* (025)

Theoretical memoing allowed me to develop theoretical sensitivity during data analysis as an iterative process since it developed from the data first which then led to literature that contained further conceptual levers. I felt that theoretical memoing also captured my deliberate use of reflexivity to ensure conceptual levers from the literature were sensitising concepts that guided data analysis, without dominating or controlling the analytical process. Box 4 *Using literature as a conceptual lever* provides an example of how literature further sensitised me to concepts already seen in the data, thereby confirming the analysis was grounded in the data.

#### Box 4 Memo: using literature as a conceptual lever

Theoretical memo: Organisational Provocateur

Having just re-read an article on a Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man framework for HR/D in a post-crisis context. It was interesting to note that typically organisations focus on the recovery of systems, operations, infrastructure and public relations ahead of people (Lockwood, 2005). Authors argue that post-crisis HRD can act as in a way to ‘provoke’ the organisation into new ways of learning so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past. By integrating HR/D practices in a thoughtful and strategic manner, it provides an opportunity to shift perspective from dwelling on what took place in the past, to a mindset that can help inform future behaviours. Data from the Senior Leader cohort in particular has shown how the design of HRD interventions has caused leaders to step back and reflect on their behaviours and recognise the role that they played in allowing the conditions for the crisis to occur. By playing the role of provocateur, HRD can/could stimulate organisational learning.

A challenge for HRD value is how perceptions differ amongst various stakeholders (Alagaraja, 2013; Mitsakis, 2017). Theoretical memoing about negative cases allowed for variations in the data to be explored for a richer and more well-rounded analysis. Negative cases are seen as demonstrating sharp contrasts with the major patterns present in the data Charmaz (2016,). Understanding negative cases is as essential as the frequently occurring situations to have a more in-depth comprehension of processes as a whole (Morse, 2015). Analysing alternative perspectives is also advocated by Kolb

(2012) to provide further insight into the topic, aid with theoretical sampling and guide data collection.

Theoretical memos enhanced the process of extracting meaning from data as memoing identified gaps in the data and identified areas needing further data generation, analysis and development. Memos provided a record of the logical processes used while extracting meaning from the data, including how data were coded and categorised and ultimately how the grounded theory developed. As the data analysis progressed into the later stages of the study, theoretical memos explored the higher level of abstraction which occurred during theory integration.

Memoing therefore, provided a record of patterns and connections identified in the data, explored questions about how further data generation and documented choices made throughout the data analysis and theory building. Memos also showed the substantive theory was grounded in the data, provided evidence of decisions related to theoretical sufficiency. A memo bank collected each memo's original, unedited free-writing and any further text writing, images or diagrams. The memo bank became additional data which symbolised the merging of data collection and analysis processes used for the research.

The previous three sections have provided a description of the memoing process used in the study. In the next section I will describe the coding process that was applied to the



data. CGT suggests three stages in coding: initial, focused and theoretical. A description of the initial coding process will be provided first.

### **3.10.2 Initial coding**

Data analysis used CGT coding, which is the process of defining, describing and extracting meaning from the participant's views and actions (Charmaz 2014). Codes were constructed as a symbol to represent an abstract understanding of the data. Coding enabled the raw interview data to be systematically organised and condensed down into manageable amounts of analysed information. During coding, I remained open-minded and willing to explore whatever ideas and eventualities developed from the data which was an active attempt to avoid forcing the data from preconceptions and personal biases.

Line-by-line coding during the initial stages of data analysis involved labelling each line of the interview transcript. Line-by-line coding helped me to notice small nuances, and it enabled full engagement with finding an initial sense of how participants constructed the core categories of macro environment (Regulatory landscape), micro environment (Crisis stages, HRD Investment) and dynamic HRD roles. Codes were expressed using gerunds where possible to emphasise action within the social processes as recommended in grounded theory research (Charmaz; 2014). Some codes were in-vivo codes which used the participant's own words as a deliberate attempt to preserve the original intention and meaning of the participant's point of view (Charmaz 2014). Examples of in-vivo codes were *Openness to challenge*, *red-line management* and *learned helplessness*. The initial coding during the early data analysis identified

numerous codes which were then compared with each other. These codes were also compared across other interviews to see the replication of similar ideas, recognise gaps and identify which codes appeared to be the most significant representation of the participants' perspective. Table 3.12 on the following page provides an example of early data analysis using line-by-line coding.

**Table 3.12 Line by line coding**

Transcribed Interview Data	Line by line Coding
<p>I don't think sometimes we repeat messages and are consistent enough in that repetition for those messages to actually land. And I think organisations, because they're quite short term as well, I don't think people spend long enough therefore, messaging... I mean we talked a lot about what it takes, five years to really effect stronger cultural change. So we have a five year long-term plan in terms of the financials that you have to do for the regulator but there's nothing in that that will actually be properly strategically thought through because every year you're scrabbling around, what's the programme, what's the thing that's going to deliver the numbers this year.</p>	<p>Plan &amp; message for longevity</p> <p>Temporal nature of crisis</p> <p>Focus on short-term wins</p> <p>Embedding of culture</p> <p>Role of regulator</p> <p>Business focus on short-term numbers</p>

As the data continued to be sifted, sorted and refined, groups of similar codes formed into categories. From the analysis at this stage, I observed that participants constructed, *crisis stage, HRD voice, risk running the bank, not hiding from past mistakes and the use of metrics to aid evaluation* as categories to develop. Other new ideas which significantly emerged from the constant comparison of the data included: tactical vs strategic role of HRD, the role of executive sponsorship, developing capability, multiple HRD roles and developing organisational purpose.

### **3.10.3 Focused coding**

Further analysis of the initial codes supported theoretical sensitivity towards key ideas, which enabled further data generation to embellish and fill in the gaps of the significant categories. I continued to review the CM and HRD literature to become more theoretically sensitive to organisational social processes not seen during the initial coding. Care was taken to make sure publications used as conceptual levers were only for concepts already in the data. For example, a key literature source at this point in the analysis was the Dynamic Capabilities literature (Garavan et al., 2016) which provided language to explain the ‘developing’ social processes of HRD being able to adopt several simultaneous roles within each crisis stage, without forcing ideas ‘onto’ the data. Existing theories, which appeared to capture the most significant social processes in the data, were then compared with each other. These theories, ‘tried out’ as provisional concepts to explain the data’s social processes, were also evaluated while re-visiting the interview transcripts, initial coding and memoing done up until that point of the study. Chapter 7 will provide a description of how the theory development integrated the data and literature. Flip chart paper and diagramming provided one comparative view of relevant theories related to social processes to aid with the abstraction of ideas (see Appendix K)

There continued to be iterative cycles of data generation through theoretical sampling and comparison with the existing literature based on the developing theoretical sensitivity. Coding became increasingly focused. Collections of similar codes were re-examined using higher levels of abstraction from the borrowed relevant theories.

Categories which emerged as the most meaningful in explaining social processes for understanding the value proposition of HRD included several dynamic HRD roles: *HRD voice, Provocateur, Healer*. Table 3.13 on the following page demonstrates the progression of a selection of these categories from initial and focused coding. This table is not an exhaustive list of all codes and categories. A selection was presented to illustrate the analytical process of how initial codes developed into focused codes which were grouped together into categories. The categories of *HRD Voice, Provocateur, Crisis Stages* and *Regulatory Landscape*, were seen as some of the most significant abstract concepts and the basis for theory development.

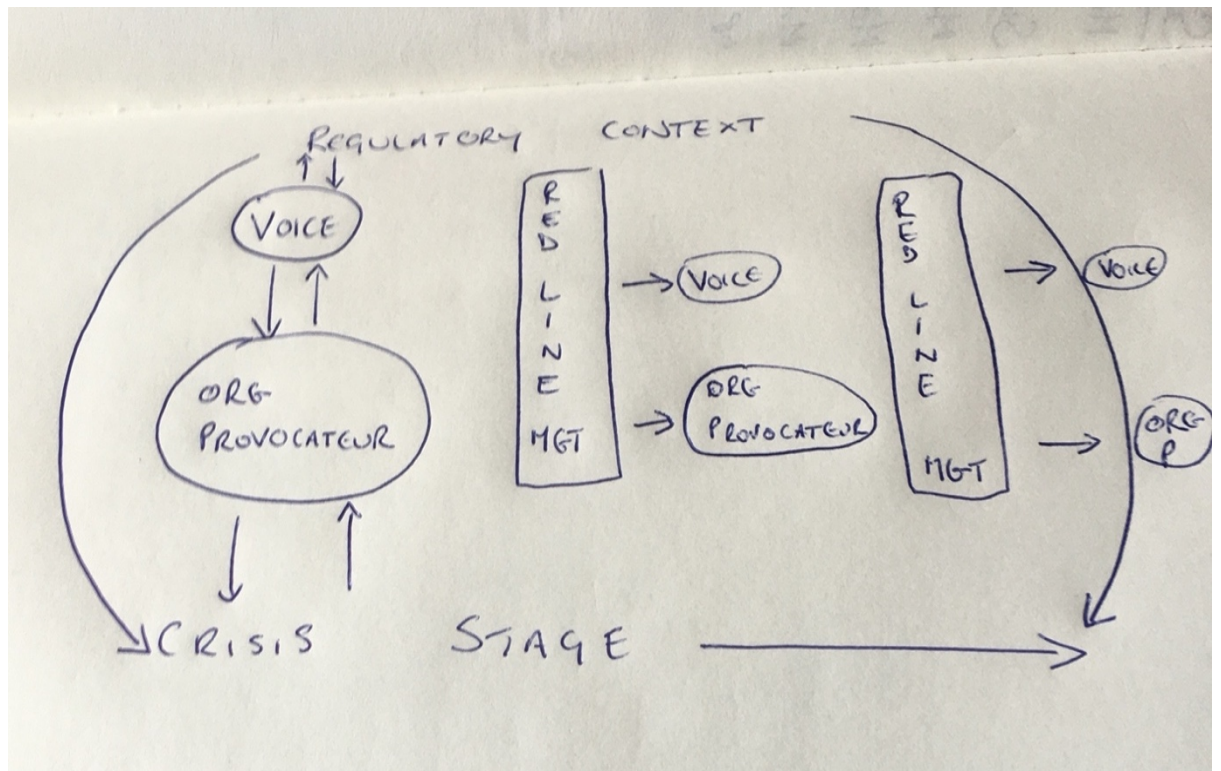
**Table 3.13 Initial and focused coding leading to abstract categories**

<b>Initial Coding</b>	<b>Focused Coding</b>	<b>Category</b>
Passive and invisible Training provider role Lack of voice Acted as logistics operator HRD largely absent Learned helplessness Not taken seriously by senior leadership	Exec Sponsorship CEO development orientation Lack of business knowledge Lack of CM knowledge Tactical vs strategic over time	<b>HRD Voice</b>  Properties: Relationship with CEO Alignment with CM goals
Causing leaders to look at themselves Thoughtful and integrated design principles Not hiding from past mistakes Organisational Conscience Ethical decision-making Asking the why question Disruptive learning Openness to challenge	Shift in blame culture Bringing back humanity to the org HRD acting as a check/control Holding up the mirror Alignment of values Challenger role	<b>Provocateur</b>  Properties: Critical reflection Overcoming barriers to learning Alignment of values
Mandate for HRD Losing org memory Focus on senior leadership Firefighting Stabilisation Shift to leader-led	Plan and msg for longevity Stage specific Focus on survival Redefining purpose Reposition for growth Embedding learning	<b>Crisis Stage</b>  Properties: Containment Recovery Renewal

Shift to well-being		
Change owned by Risk The regulator drives deep into functions Govt ownership Risk guys run the bank Support for senior leaders Tail wags the dog Compliance training Demonstrate to regulator	Role of regulator Lack of business understanding/SMCR Change in people, process & procedure Impact of compliance training	<b>Regulatory Landscape</b> Properties: Demonstrating change Delivery of mandatory training Coaching support for leaders

### 3.10.4 Theoretical coding

The final stage in the coding process involved focused coding merging into theoretical coding Figure 3.2 below was an early model of the proposed substantive theory that I developed using flipcharts. As a visual learner I found this process of diagramming helpful as it allowed me to get my thoughts onto paper and supported my use of memos in the theory development process. Further elaboration of this diagram ultimately resulted in the substantive theory summary presented as Figure 7.1 in section 7.1.



**Figure 3-2 Early conceptualisation of HRD value in post crisis theory model**

Advanced data analysis continued by theoretically sampling literature from the SHRD Dynamic Capabilities literature (Garavan et al., 2016), SHRD Maturity framework (Mitsakis, 2017), HRD roles in Crisis (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) and S/HRD in Crisis Management (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011).

Borrowing language from these extant theories helped to explain these significant social processes in the substantive theory. For example, the data showed that a value of HRD was the ability to support the organisation through the emotional and psychological trauma of the crisis. Using the term *HRD Healer* from the Nizamidou and Vouzas, (2018) framework was identified as a suitable fit to describe the process that participants described.

Having described the techniques I deployed to analysis the data generated in the study, the final section of this chapter will describe the ethical considerations that underpinned my research approach and how I applied these to the study.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

Throughout the study I followed the Birkbeck College research ethics and governance procedures including completion of a risk assessment and governance checklist. For phase 1, I used my own personal email and LinkedIn to contact potential participants directly. For phase 2, the initial introductions were made through my point of contact within the organisation. People who expressed an interest in volunteering for the study were emailed or messaged back asking them to review the inclusion and exclusion criteria and participant information sheet (see Appendix A, D, G) before completing the consent form (see Appendix B, E, H depending on whether they were phase 1 or 2). Participants were given at least 24 hours between volunteering for the study and the interview being scheduled to allow sufficient time to consider all aspects of the research. Consent was also verbally ‘refreshed’ before starting the interview and participants advised that they could have a copy of the interview transcript sent to them if requested. None of the participants requested a transcription to be sent to them.

The participant information sheet emphasised participating in the study was entirely voluntary, and consent could be withdrawn at any point. However, by taking a constructivist grounded theory approach, I analysed the data throughout the data collection period including during the interview itself. If a participant withdrew after an interview had started, it would have been impossible to take away the data collected and analysed which had occurred up until that point (I would not be able to ‘un-hear’

something a participant had already said during this simultaneous process of data collection and analysis, Charmaz, 2014). I recognised that there was also co-construction of the meaning of the data between myself and the participant (Charmaz 2014). The data collected and interpreted to the point of withdrawal would, therefore, need to be considered as part of the study and integrated into the building theory. This was clearly stated in the participant consent sheet and rechecked when consent was verbally 'refreshed' at the beginning of the interview. In doing so, I was fully transparent about the implications for withdrawing consent after an interview had started and ensured their consent was truly informed. There were no participants who asked to be withdrawn from the study.

Interviews were audio-recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. After completing the transcription of each interview, the recorded interview was deleted from the audio recorder. As outlined earlier, a designated participant number was assigned to each person in the sample to anonymise the data after recording and transcribing. The participant's contact details, the list allocating each person with a participant number and the consent forms were kept separately from the rest of the research documents on a secure network drive. The participant information sheet made it clear that all interview data would be anonymous and participant names and contact details left out when reporting of the research findings.

All files related to the study were password protected and stored on a secure network drive with only myself having access to passwords. A spare audio recorder was



available during all interviews in case of failure of the primary audio recorder. The laptop used for the study also had a firewall, was password-protected and locked when not in use. Participant privacy was, therefore, maintained as I complied with the DPA 2018 GDPR requirements and Birkbeck College policies for data protection and research ethics and governance.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

In this research methods chapter, I have presented my philosophical position of adopting a constructivist-interpretive approach to investigating HRD value in a post-crisis context. My epistemological stance further informed the choice to adopt a CGT approach. The research design consisted of two phases. Phase 1 involved 50 semi-structured interviews with HR/D practitioners, external learning partners and senior leaders. Phase 2 provided further data from a case study organisation with 15 interviews, two focus groups and a review of a limited number of organisational documents. The methods used for sampling, data generation and data analysis, were underpinned by a CGT approach. My reflexive approach has been integrated throughout the chapter, providing examples through memos and description of key methodological decisions as to how I was aware of my active role in the research process and end product. Ethical considerations concluded this chapter. Research findings for phase 1 are presented in chapter 4 and 5 and phase 2 findings (BankCo) presented in chapter 6.

## 4 Chapter 4 Phase 1 findings

This chapter consolidates the research data of significant findings from phase 1 of the study which consisted of 50 interviews with senior leaders, HR/D practitioners and external learning consultancies from 23 different UK and Irish Banking organisations. The findings describe stakeholder perception of the value of HRD in a post-crisis context and the influencing social processes. The presentation of the findings is framed according to the emergent substantive theory to show how the 13 major core categories developed into the theory. The core categories listed in Table 4.1 below were grouped into three themes: macro environment, micro environments and dynamic HRD roles.

**Table 4.1 Core categories mapped to themes**

Themes	Core Category
Macro environment	Regulatory Landscape
Micro environments	Crisis Stages (Containment, Recovery, Renewal) HRD Investment
Dynamic HRD roles	HRD Voice, Healer, Provocateur, Change Agent, Organisational Designer, Renaissance Man, Problem Finder, Dynamic Capability Developer

### 4.1 Chapter structure

The findings present a challenge in how best to present the information, given that perceptions of HRD value are known to vary between stakeholders even within the same organisation (Mitsakis, 2017). There were often conflicting views among participants, illustrating the messiness of a constructivist grounded theory approach. Ultimately, however, being able to address such complexity is also part of its utility as a methodology. To guide the reader most effectively, this chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I will present the findings relating to the impact of the macro environment, *Regulatory Landscape* on HRD value. Following this, the micro environment of *HRD*

*Investment* will describe the influence cost-cutting had on HRD practices. In chapter 5, I will then present the findings associated with the second micro environment, *Crisis Stages*. This micro environment describes the post-crisis period as consisting of three distinct crisis stages, *containment, recovery and renewal*. Each stage was not discreet with a precise start and finish but overlapped with each other as shown in Figure 4.1 below.



**Figure 4-1 Micro environments: crisis stages**

Chapter 5 will present the findings that identified eight specific dynamic HRD roles that explained HRD value in the post-crisis period. The study showed that these roles were required to be displayed simultaneously by the HRD function within a crisis stage, ***but not*** consistently across all stages. For example, once the initial impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) had reduced, participants perceived the need for HRD to support individuals through the emotional impact of the crisis was less applicable as other organisational priorities took precedence. The exception is the *HRD Voice* role as this was described as both consistent and strengthening throughout the post-crisis period through executive sponsorship and the ability to help influence the HRD agenda with organisational goals

The dynamic HRD roles are therefore best understood within the context of a specific crisis stage and for ease of reading will be presented as such in chapter 5. By way of overview and orientation Table 4.2 below shows how the findings map each crisis stage to the relevant dynamic HRD role.

**Table 4.2 Crisis stages mapping dynamic HRD roles**

<b>Crisis Stage</b>	<b>Dynamic HRD Role</b>
Containment	HRD Voice Healer Provocateur
Recovery	HRD Voice Renaissance Man Change Agent Organisational Designer
Renewal	HRD Voice Problem Finder Dynamic Capability Developer

In this chapter, each core category will be presented as follows. An overview will be provided, identifying in **bold**, properties of the category. Next, the senior leaders' perspective will be presented, followed by that of HR/D practitioners and external learning consultancies. Each category will then be concluded with a summary of the data, comparing the perspectives in keeping with the aim of this study to understand different stakeholder perspectives of HRD value.

Fuller details of the processes that supported the data analysis have been discussed in chapter 3. To illustrate and ground the substantive explanatory theory which developed from the findings, excerpts from interview transcripts are used. Quotations were selected to illustrate commonly held views or to show significance and variation in the data.

## 4.2 Macro environment: regulatory landscape

As discussed in section 1.1 the mismanagement that was prevalent in the banking industry pre-crisis resulted in the regulator playing a significant role post-crisis. HRD practices that were seen as valuable were *demonstrating cultural change* to the regulator, providing *coaching support* for senior leaders, and *delivering mandatory compliance training*.

### 4.2.1 Regulatory landscape: senior leaders' perspective

Senior leaders described the impact of the regulatory context when sharing their views on the value perception of HRD within their organisations. The dominant view was that:

*A key requirement of senior leaders was to demonstrate **behavioural change** to the regulator otherwise they risked institutional and personal repercussions in the form of fines or removal from their position. (SL13).*

A good example of this was three of the senior leaders (SL02, SL03, SL08) who were from the same Irish Bank, expressing concern that the patience of the regulator was waning with the organisation as the regulator felt the organisation was not demonstrating change at a significant pace. Their view is summed up in the excerpt below from the Head of Branch Banking (SL03), who would have had significant headcount reporting to them:

*In terms of the priority of the leadership, there's a big agenda emerging around conduct at the moment and the way I would describe it as it's the last chance of the banks. We need to show [to the regulator] that we are getting our house in order, even several years on from the crisis. (SL03)*

This threat from the regulator was seen by senior leaders as being the key driver for cultural change. However, their view was that this was beneficial to the risk function rather than the HRD function as illustrated by SL09: *“The change in culture, is driven by risk, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> lines, not HRD”*. With the spotlight of the regulator on behaviours, process and procedure, senior leaders interpreted this as a pendulum swung regarding power and control within the banks away from sales activity. SL19 summarised it as follows; *“within this company the power lives in the risk compliance function, it’s the tail that wags the dog.”* and SL09 had a similar view that illustrates how senior leaders interpreted the risk agenda, *“we started to move to a place where ‘conduct risk was running through it [the bank’s] veins’. The risk guys are running the banks.”*. When questioned on the place of HRD in this new world, the majority of participants felt that HRD played a largely subservient role as noted by SL17, *“risk and finance were the key drivers in the business, unfortunately HRD wasn’t in the engine room, in fact they weren’t even on the bridge.”*. Other participants noted that the formation of a new C-Suite trinity in the form of CEO, CRO (Chief Risk Officer) and CFO (Chief Finance Officer), with the perception that HRD missed an opportunity to get a *“seat at the top table”* (SL01) given the cultural agenda that needed addressed.

When questioned further on whether the regulatory landscape was a barrier or enabler to HRD value, participants described it as *“a lost opportunity for the function [HRD] to align specific HRD practices with regulatory requirements”* (SL03). Specifically, senior leaders described the Senior Manager Conduct Regime (SMCR) as a regulated activity introduced post-crisis where HRD didn’t play a strategic role. As part of new regulations, banks were required to implement a new policy aimed at driving increased accountability for those in senior leadership. As senior leaders within banking, these

participants felt the impact of the SMCR more acutely than others within the business as illustrated by SL06, one of the two CEO's who took part in phase 1:

*The basics of it [SMCR] are that they [the regulator] have....instead of saying the bank needs to do this or the bank needs to do that, they identify key roles in a firm and they say right, you are now a material risk-taker....you're going to take risks here yourself personally, if you get this wrong we're going to fine you, we might even arrest you and throw you in prison. We might take away your pension ten years after the fact. So, they brought in this regime, which has a significant impact on us as leaders about what we do and the decisions we make. (SL06)*

The predominant view was that the SMCR could “*have provided a mechanism for HRD to demonstrate strategic value in assessing and developing the relevant capabilities required by the SMCR*” (SL01) and “*demonstrate effective business partnering within the business*” (SL11). However, leaders thought that HRD largely defaulted to a project management mindset focusing on generating evidence to satisfy the regulator and delivering mandatory training, rather than using the SMCR as a means for engaging in talent development practices as illustrated by the statement below from SL15:

*With the introduction of the SMCR there were a set of new requirements from the regulator. SMCR was treated like a project rather than an opportunity which I think was an opportunity that was missed with no refresh of the talent grid. The focus was too much on the evidence required to keep the regulator happy rather than focusing on the developmental side of things. (SL15)*

The views of SL15 introduces themes that are also reflected in section 5.6.1 that suggest HRD acted operationally rather than strategically at different stages in the post-crisis period.

SL15, a Chief Risk Officer was one of the strongest critics in arguing that HRD didn't provide value in supporting the implementation of the SMCR due to their lack of knowledge of the business:

*I'm heavily involved from the regulatory side so we've been really focusing on the senior manager conduct regime and how the senior managers can actually shift culture in an organisation, so thinking about conduct roles, thinking about how we consider accountability, how we discharge responsibility, how we look at governance is a key part of that. **This is not something that HRD get involved in, because it is not something they know anything about.** (SL15)*

The regulator context helped explain the strength of his feelings, as his organisation was one that would have been in the public press regularly due to on-going issues around conduct and in section 5.2.1 (*HRD Voice*) his views reinforce that such pressures drove a very directive leadership style impacting HRD's ability to engage with the CEO and management team.

However, two leaders thought that HRD had provided value in supporting the SMCR activity through effective business partnering. SL07 was also a Chief Risk Officer, owning the risk agenda. However, their organisation was much smaller than that of SL15, which they saw as a positive enabler of working closely with HRD along with not being under the same amount of pressure from the regulator given their strong conduct and risk reputation within the industry:

*We've done an awful lot on SMCR in the business over the last year and a half, particularly led out of my team but we have a shared role with the HRD function in how we go about developing and embedding this (SL07)*



Another participant SL09 who was Managing Director saw HRD's value relating to the SMCR based on the role that the function was playing in supporting senior leaders in the annual sign off process with the regulator regarding their ability to continue in role:

*I suppose the other thing that changed, I suppose it wasn't like purposeful, but it has helped, with the new fitness and probity process that you have to go through in the bank and get signed off every year in terms of your fitness to do the job, that has given certainly a sense of responsibility to the senior managers in the business. And HRD has increasingly played more of a role in helping leaders prepare for this process. (SL09)*

When questioned further, he shared how HRD had provided external coaching in his organisation for leaders to help deal with the demands of the regulator.

In summarising senior leader perspectives, the view was that HRD was helpful in providing evidence to the regulator but had lost an opportunity to act strategically in meeting regulatory demands, specifically in supporting senior leaders in dealing with the SMCR requirements.

#### **4.2.2 Regulatory landscape: HR/D perspective**

Similar to the views of senior leaders the influence of the regulator was perceived by HR/D practitioners as setting “*very clear marching orders from many different regulators to really get our [the Banks leadership] act together*” (HRD02) and creating a mindset where “*regulatory appeasement had a massive priority*” (HRD10).

Demonstrating cultural change by providing evidence to the regulator became a key activity that HRD undertook as illustrated by the example statement below:

*I had to walk through our succession plans with them [the regulator] in a very granular level, as we're highly supervised, probably more so than other banks because we're x% state owned and it is very, very invasive in what you do and there is no, there is zero tolerance, if they're looking for something then they want the evidence of it and it's all evidence based so there's nowhere to run, there's nowhere to hide, you've gotta do it. (HRD 14)*

From this excerpt HRD14 appears to attribute that the amount of scrutiny they experienced was due to the level of government ownership. However other participants whose organisation did not have any form of government aid also referenced the “heavy-handedness” (HRD09) and “unprecedented requirement for detail” (HRD23) that came from the regulator.

HRD was also required to develop a new set of stakeholder relationships with the regulator as illustrated in the statement from HRD19, “for the first time ever, the regulator was going to start scrutinising what frameworks we [HRD] had in place for the top team and the talent pool in the business”.

Different to the perception of leaders, HR/D practitioners viewed the direction they provided to their senior leadership teams on how to meet and manage the demands of the regulator as a key indicator of their value in the post-crisis context as evidenced by the statement below from HRD 25:

*What happened was the whole fitness and probity regime [SMCR] was introduced and that put a whole other flavour on leadership and talent. That was scary stuff for the chairman, for the board, for executive committees, in identifying who was deemed fit for their job. **Suddenly we [HRD] were the people in demand, with the ear of the CEO.** (HRD25)*

The requirement to demonstrate cultural change to the regulator was seen by some of the HR/D practitioners as a double-edged sword. HRD02 expressed concern that as a function, it had “*fallen through the trap-door of risk*” and adopted a “*compliance approach to learning*”. There were concerns expressed about HRD being viewed as “*a control function*” (HRD10) in the delivery of mandatory learning, diminishing their strategic role. The statement from HRD24 below illustrates how the regulator provided a remit for HRD to demonstrate its legitimacy post-crisis in supporting the compliance agenda, but also the negative impact on the value of HRD, relegating its practices to being seen as mere “tick boxing”:

*The mandatory learning bit became really massive that people had to do these things, that they had to be done by a certain date with everybody reporting on it. Everybody was screaming if people didn't do it. Learning didn't become a helpful thing for your career, it became a thing you had to do, to tick a box, not necessarily a bad box but you did have to tick a lot of boxes. (HRD24)*

The volume of regulatory requirements in the initial stages of the crisis was seen to present additional challenges to HRD's value by leaving limited time for “*additional developmental practices*” (HRD20) with budgets being assigned to “*mandatory learning*” (HRD27) “*shifting funding and resource from more traditional development programmes to those that supported new regulatory requirements*” (HRD11). However, several HR/D participants referenced that they had provided coaching support either themselves or sourced external coaches for their leaders to support the additional demands of the regulator.

Summarising HR/D's perspectives, there was a requirement to build new stakeholder relationships with the regulator with different views as to the impact of regulation specifically relating to the nature and scale of mandatory training.

### **4.2.3 Summary: regulatory landscape**

Both sets of respondents saw the regulatory landscape as creating positive and negative impacts on HRD. There was agreement that the influence of the regulator acted as a positive catalyst for change to deal with pre-crisis excessive risk-taking which in turn elevated the requirement for learning practices. However, the presence of the regulator was double-edged for HRD. It highlighted their lack of understanding relating to regulation which damaged their reputation with senior leaders and impacted their capacity to act strategically in the crisis. Along with this, the need to produce evidence to the regulator was seen by HRD as diminishing the value of HRD with its outputs being reduced to a set of mandatory learning practices, focused on compliance and risk. Senior leaders saw HRD as playing a subservient role rather than strategic one, with the risk function acting as the main driver for change. The SMCR was a lens through which there was a difference in what constituted HRD value. Senior leaders described HRD as being largely absent in their hour of need, due to a lack of business understanding and that HRD defaulted to a project management mindset. However, HR/D participants felt that the SMCR created a compelling reason for the senior leadership to engage more closely with them, attributing the SMCR as one of the reasons why HRD practitioners were more in demand at a leadership level compared to pre-crisis. Furthermore, the provision of coaching was seen as a valuable support in meeting the demands of the regulator from HRD professionals, however this view was more limited from senior leaders. The findings in relation to the *Regulatory Landscape* highlight the complexity of HRD value with different views expressed by each set of respondents. It reinforces

the need for HRD to have a thorough understanding of the business context to add value and the impact that external factors such as regulation can have on HRD in a crisis context.

Having discussed the findings as they related to the macro environment of *Regulatory Landscape*, the next section will present the findings on the first of two micro environments; *HRD Investment*.

### **4.3 Micro environment [1]: HRD investment**

A feature of the post-crisis era was the range of cost-cutting initiatives that were delivered within organisations. Whilst HRD was not exempt from these initiatives, participants attributed HRD value as the ability to secure on-going investment for HRD various practices whilst other business functions' budgets were reduced. This was achieved through a *strategic approach to evaluation, business partnering* and *innovative design, delivery and embedding approaches*.

#### **4.3.1 HRD investment: senior leaders' perspective**

The crisis required senior management to ensure the survival of their organisations. This was characterised by "*the beginning of cost-cutting measures as many banks went through a process of re-defining their operating model*" (SL03). However, against this backdrop of cost-cutting, all of the participants acknowledged that investment in HRD practices continued. There were different opinions offered as to the motivation for this investment. Several participants saw it as a form of lip service as a means "*to prove to the regulator, public and the Board that we had learnt our lesson and change was under-way*" (SL18). Others, most notably those who were the most senior in the

organisation felt that *HRD Investment* was necessary if the organisation was to truly embrace the need for cultural change and develop competitive advantage against a backdrop of changes in markets and consumer behaviour.

The importance of senior level sponsorship in promoting and securing funding for HRD was reinforced by participants who spoke about the role of the CEO. Having a strong leader who saw value in development was seen as being a key enabler for investment to be released as illustrated in the statement below:

*And I guess whilst there's an agenda around cost cutting, it's the top-level endorsement that has allowed this programme to have enough air cover, oxygen, funding, and investment to actually run. (SL01)*

The strategic approach to evaluation was seen to aid *HRD Investment*. One CEO (SL06) felt that HRD made his decision to release funding easier due to the metrics that were made available to him on the impact of HRD practices through leadership engagement scores and staff surveys. Other C-Suite leaders also felt that HRD had done a good job in educating the top team about to impact of HRD practices, although this was tempered with a view that to satisfy the regulator, HRD had to “*up its game in regard to reporting*” (SL04), which had a positive knock-on effect in terms of how evaluation and training ROI was presented internally to the business.

Business partnering and *HRD Investment* were described by senior leaders as going hand in hand. Ongoing investment throughout the post-crisis period was required to meet the demands of the regulator but also develop skills and capabilities given the changes in banking such as the move to on-line banking. As noted in section 4.3.1,

HRD's lack of understanding banking regulation impacted their strategic influence regarding developing regulation specific capabilities. However, in other areas such as developing skills for a digital agenda the majority of leaders thought that HRD was more effective in its role of business partnering by conducting training need analysis to identify gaps in skills and capabilities and developing appropriate practices to build these capabilities (see section 5.10.1 for examples).

A negative impact on business partnering was the reduction in HRD headcount with 5 participants (SL03, SL09, SL11, SL16, SL17) feeling that there was only a *“very small number of HRD partners available for the benefit of the most senior people”* (SL16). By way of explanation, these five participants managed large front-line staff teams and as such had seen a reduction in the ratio of HRD to line managers within their respective organisations. They felt that HRD practices were being off-loaded to their already over-stretched line managers. Furthermore, they felt that the capability of HRD practitioners was impacted by cost cutting as illustrated in the statement below:

*HRD has been stripped back and lost a lot of its core capabilities. What often happens during these redundancies is that the good people with all the experience go, as the VR [voluntary redundancy] packages are much more attractive to them. (SL12)*

The above statement illustrates that senior leaders acknowledged that HRD was not totally exempt to a reduction in headcount. There was also a recognition that budgets for development had been impacted. However, leaders identified the innovative approach to design, delivery and evaluation by leveraging technology as evidence that *“HRD was running a lean operation, that had to think smarter and do more with less”* (SL14). An

example of this was how the most senior leaders shared how HRD had partnered with external learning consultancies and used media such as podcasts and video broadcasts to get the views of senior leadership represented in wider cultural change programmes.

Summarizing senior leader perspectives, strategic evaluation along with innovative approaches to HRD practices were perceived as demonstrating HRD value. A barrier to business partnering was the reduction in HRD personnel.

#### **4.3.2 HRD investment: HR/D perspective**

Participants spoke about the immediate aftermath of when the crisis unfolded as *“being the day when the world changed around budgets”* (HRD25). Prior to the crisis, investment in development programmes was perceived to be *“significant and unchallenged”* (HRD11) with business functions having their own learning budgets as well as access to group-wide initiatives. Several participants spoke about partnerships with leading business schools in providing executive development with one participant sharing that their role was *“to go around the world, visit lots of providers and select who we wanted on our campus working with our top leaders”* (HRD02). There was a view from several participants that the level of *“our [HRD] standing and credibility within the business before the crisis in delivering world class development”* (HRD13) was the reason for being able to secure *HRD investment* post-crisis whilst cost-cutting exercises were being carried out across the entire organisation.

However, one participant (HRD19) felt that the pre-crisis investment was a barrier to HRD value once the crisis occurred. Stories of executive development events that were



lavish were still fresh in her organisation's memory and in their opinion portrayed the function as being part of the problem that caused the crisis:

*We suddenly found ourselves dropped like a bad smell. Now our learning function was a symbol of everything that had been wrong within the banking culture; top end venues, eye-watering amounts being paid out to external gurus and stories of all-night sessions followed by trying to stay awake in the seminars the next day. (HRD19)*

The driver for investment immediately after the crisis (*containment stage*) was questioned by 3 HRD participants with a view that it was more about making the executive team look good at a time when they were under pressure from a variety of stakeholders. The statement below from HRD22, a Head of Organisational Development from one of the largest organisations represented in the study illustrates this view:

*The enabler for the programme was that they [the Exec] threw money at it, the Exec **wanted to be seen to be doing something** and you know, it doesn't matter what you do as long as you're doing something. I don't think we [HRD] did anything by way of building a business case, they were too busy focused on other things such as raising capital and keeping the Govt at bay. (HRD22)*

However, in other sections (5.7.2), this same participant states that her organisation had invested significantly in an '*organisational purpose*' programme and in section 5.11.2 their organisation now in the *renewal* stage invests in a group-wide coaching programme to develop dynamic capabilities. Her example illustrates a shift over the post-crisis period in how *HRD Investment* was used to move from a reactionary and tactical approach to a place where investment funded practices that supported strategic goals and was backed up by robust evaluation data. The theme of '*just being seen to do*

*something*’ is also referred to in section 5.2.2 *HRD Voice* by other HR/D participants describing how in the *containment* stage HRD lacked strategic intent and were driven by a need to re-establish credibility with senior stakeholders.

Similar to the views of senior leaders, HR/D participants felt that they were effective in emphasising the need for strategic evaluation and provided the organisation with a comprehensive set of metrics that demonstrated longer-term ROI which in turn was provided to the regulator and internal stakeholders such as the Board. However, some of the participants who were part of smaller HRD teams noted that there was an impact on evaluation due to reductions in headcount as they had to resort to “*the traditional sheep-dip approach to learning*” (HRD19). This limited follow up through targeted practices such as coaching or further learning practices, due to the scale of the cultural change programmes that were being undertaken along with the increased demands of mandatory training as noted earlier in section 4.2.2.

Along with using strategic evaluation to influence budget, participants shared specific examples of strategies they used to secure on-going investment. One of the common strategies adopted is illustrated in the example of HRD23, a senior HRD Director, who spoke about how she achieved buy-in from her CEO to deliver a program for the executive team. Once this team had experienced the value of the programme, it made the case for rolling out a wider programme to the leadership an easier job:

*Thankfully I had a very enlightened CEO when it came to development. His view was that his EXCO needed to decompress every quarter, come together with some external facilitators and work on their team effectiveness. It wasn't long before the rest of the team were coming to me and asking could we set something up for their teams also. (HRD23)*

The above example shows how HRD displayed dynamic capabilities. In this case, being able to scan the internal environment, see the need within the executive team, act on this need and then adapt to seize the opportunity within the wider leadership teams. It also reinforces the orientation of a CEO to development and how this can be helpful to HRD practices as illustrated in the BankCo (see section 6.6.3 for further examples).

With a reduction in overall budgets, HR/D participants saw this as an opportunity to align more closely with the business and demonstrate innovation in how they designed, delivered and embedded HRD practices. To demonstrate that HRD had learnt the lessons from the past characterised by large-scale expensive programmes, the use of “*internal champions*” (HRD25) to deliver key messages was consistently adopted. This approach was beneficial in re-building engagement with the business whilst managing cost by not using external learning partners. Another strategy used by HRD was the increased role that line managers were expected to play in disseminating high level messages around vision, values and behaviours. Technology was seen as another tool that HRD leveraged to keep cost down. In more recent years HRD had moved away from traditional classroom-based learning to a more on-demand model that was built around the needs of the individual which was seen as a positive outcome of reduced budgets as shown in the example below:

*Yes, cost became more of a consideration than it was before and yes, again I think there was more of a focus on leveraging technology, being a bit more efficient with how we deliver learning. One of the things we did was to build an App to support learning. One for the Manager and one for the participant. I don't know if we would have done that if we weren't told that our budget had been slashed by 50%. (HRD17)*

The negative impact of downsizing on business partnering was identified by participants. As a function it did not escape the radical cost-cutting that was a permanent feature across the Banks with one participant commenting “*there has never been a year in the past eleven when there hasn’t been a restructure within our function*” (HRD16) and another expressing concern that, “*people say we’re cutting into bone, we’re not actually, we’re cutting away limbs now, if you were a body they’re saying you don’t actually need your left arm to function, you can do without it*” (HRD06).

However, some participants from larger organisations viewed the downsizing as a positive enabler for business partnering stating that it allowed HRD to move away from “*centralised model and allowed it to get much closer to the business*” (HRD05), removing a lot of duplication of services that had existed prior to the crisis.

Centralisation of HRD practices was also seen as an enabler of HRD value within the BankCo (see section 6.12.2 for examples).

Summarising the HR/D perspective, the crisis signalled a change in how HRD secured investment with a greater emphasis on evaluation and innovative approaches to deal with the impact of reduced budget and headcount within HRD.

### **4.3.3 Summary: HRD investment**

The findings show that investment into HRD practices was reduced post-crisis compared to pre-crisis irrespective of the size of organisation. However, there was also broad agreement that HRD value was seen as the ability to secure budgets in the context of cost-cutting. Practices that supported *HRD Investment* included a more strategic approach to evaluation, effective business partnering and innovative approaches in the design, delivery and embedding of learning practices. The use of internal culture champions, devolving responsibility to line managers and the use of technology and

media such as learning apps and podcasts were provided as examples of how HRD evolved its practices in response to shrinking budgets.

In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, *HRD Investment* was maintained, however there were different views on the motivation for this. Some viewed it as a tactical move by the executive team to be doing something, whereas those who were C-Suite leaders saw it as strategic important in signalling to internal and external stakeholders that cultural change was endorsed by executive management. This suggests an elevated role of the CEO and other senior executives' post-crisis to secure *HRD Investment*. Those most impacted by a reduction in the size of the HRD function were leaders who managed large front-line teams who expressed concern at the access to and quality of business partnering available post-crisis and the added burden this had with line managers taking on HRD practices. HR/D participants from smaller organisations also identified that a reduction in headcount resulted in limited resources to conduct evaluation or embedding practices.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the significant findings from the Phase 1 participants relating to the core categories of macro environment: *Regulatory Landscape* and the first micro environment: *HRD Investment*. The findings show that HRD value in a post-crisis context is associated with how HRD adapts and responds to these environmental demands which vary in pace and intensity depending on the crisis stage. The findings demonstrate the need for HRD to be environmentally integrated both at a macro and micro level (Garavan, 2007; Mitsakis, 2017).

Views from the different stakeholders were often conflicting, highlighting the challenge with identifying the nature of HRD value. The mixed perceptions of stakeholders can be clearly illustrated in the ‘mixed perceptions of HRD value’ table below (table 4.5).

**Table 4. 5 Mixed perceptions of HRD value in response to Regulatory landscape and HRD investment**

<b>Regulatory Landscape (HRD value add practices)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior leaders</b>
Demonstrating cultural change to the regulator	+	+/-
Providing coaching support	+	+/-
Delivering mandatory compliance training	-	+/-
<b>HRD Investment (HRD value add practices)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior leaders</b>
Strategic approach to evaluation	+	+
Business partnering	-	-
Innovative design, delivery and embedding approaches	+	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

Following the strength of the evidence provided, this was classified as (+) positive perception of adding HRD value, (+/-) neutral perceptions of adding HRD value and (-) negative perceptions of HRD value. There was however agreement that the *Regulatory Landscape* did provide a mandate for HRD to demonstrate culture change to the regulator. Views from senior leaders highlight that they had expectations that HRD practitioner’s possess appropriate knowledge of regulation and how it translated to development activities (Aldrich et al., 2015). The lack of this knowledge was seen both as a lost opportunity for HRD to act more strategically and impacting on HRD

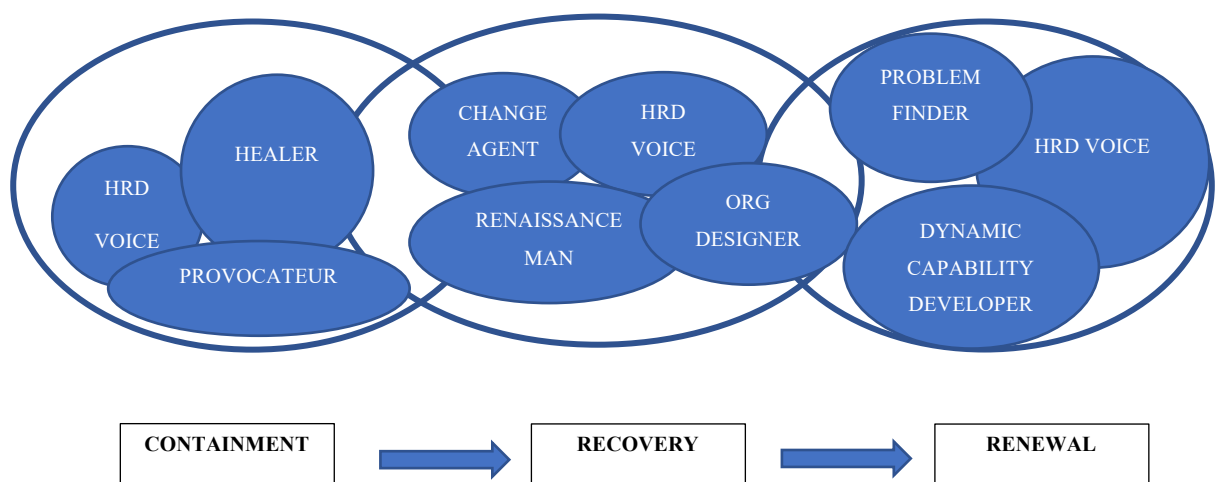
credibility. Whereas HR/D practitioners viewed the *Regulatory Landscape* more positively as an enabler to build stronger relationships with the senior leadership.

*HRD Investment* was interpreted as the ability to provide a more strategic approach to evaluation than pre-crisis and also bring innovation to design, delivery and embedding practices of cultural change programmes. Senior leader expectations on the use of metrics, reinforces the need for HRD practitioners to use organisational data to help make informed business decisions (Gubbins et al., 2018). It also highlights the importance of HRD developing a more strategic approach to evaluation as it relates to investment in HRD within a crisis context (Mitsakis, 2017; Zavyalova, Kucherov and Tsybova, 2018). The findings show that the post-crisis context had a negative impact on HRD business partnering due to reduction in HRD head-count and provides new empirical evidence on business partnering in dynamic contexts (Mitsakis, 2017).

In the next chapter I will present the findings as they relate to the second micro environment, *Crisis Stages* and the associated dynamic HRD roles within each crisis stage.

## 5 Chapter 5 Phase 1 findings: crisis stages and dynamic HRD roles

This chapter continues on from Chapter 4 with the presentation of the phase 1 findings relating to the second *micro environment*; *crisis stages* and the associated *dynamic HRD roles* that explain HRD value in the post-crisis period. Participants referred to different stages of crisis as they reflected on the value proposition of HRD. The sentiment was that the crisis was not just a one-off event as illustrated in the views of SL14, “*There are phases of this post-crisis era that need to be considered. I don’t know what they are, but I can clearly see there are phases that we went through*”. HRD value was described by various dynamic HRD roles that were delivered within each stage that were seen to support organisational goals. These stages were over-lapping and throughout each section in this chapter I will provide a visual depiction of how the dynamic roles were represented within each crisis stage. By way of overview and orientation, Figure 5.1 below shows the crisis stages and associated dynamic HRD roles as they were represented in the findings.



**Figure 5-1 Crisis stages and associated dynamic HRD roles**



As noted in Chapter 4, the dynamic HRD roles were displayed simultaneously within a crisis stage ***but not*** consistently across all stages. They are best understood within the context of a specific crisis stage and for ease of reading will be presented as such.

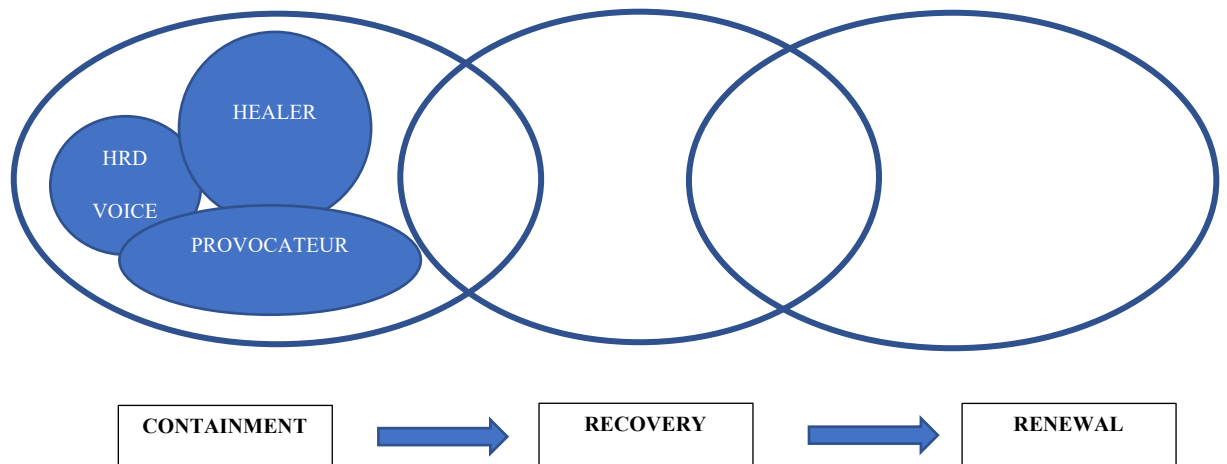
The remainder of the chapter follows the same format as chapter 4, with an overview of each crisis stage and their associated dynamic HRD roles being presented including perspectives from senior leaders, then HR/D practitioners before a summary comparing the two perspectives. Properties of the core categories are presented in ***bold*** in the overview of each of the dynamic roles. I will start by providing an overview of the containment stage.

### **5.1 Containment stage: overview**

The containment phase in the immediate aftermath of the crisis was characterised by “*sheer shock and disbelief*” (HRD07) as the magnitude of the crisis unfolded. This was seen to have an emotional and psychological impact on organisational members. Both sets of participants noted that there was a breakdown of trust between employees and management. The values and behaviours that had previously been rewarded and recognised within the business were now being framed as “*toxic and unethical*” (HRD25). Scapegoating who was to blame in allowing such a culture to develop pre-crisis resulted in the finger being pointed not only at senior leadership, but also at HRD. Senior leaders shared that immediately following the collapse of the external market, their focus was organisational survival and firefighting. This was characterised by “*rapid decision-making from senior executives on a tactical basis*” (SL02). The findings identified three dynamic HRD roles shown in Figure 5.2 on the following page,

that HRD delivered in the containment stage: *HRD Voice, Healer and Provocateur*.

*HRD Voice* will be discussed initially followed by the other two dynamic roles.



**Figure 5-2 Containment stage and associated dynamic HRD roles**

## **5.2 Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: overview**

HRD Voice was described as the ability to *develop executive sponsorship* and *strengthen relationships with stakeholders* so that the HRD agenda aligned with organisational goals. However, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, the need for a centralised decision-making approach from senior management on business and operational issues coupled with HRD's lack of understanding of crisis management principles impacted *HRD Voice*. A rebuilding of stakeholder relationships especially with the CEO and executive team was seen by the majority of participants as a key indicator of *HRD Voice* strengthening in the *containment* stage which then developed in the subsequent *recovery* and *renewal* stages.

### 5.2.1 Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: senior leaders' perspective

In the immediate aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) senior leaders regarded *HRD Voice* as adding little value. This was attributed to time pressures as illustrated by SL04, “*We didn't really have time to step back and re-evaluate. When you are in a crisis, you really don't have time to think.*” (SL04). There was also a belief that HRD was ill-prepared to deal with the crisis context; “*The HRD role requires time to understand the context; we didn't have that [time] and as a result they became a bystander without consequence*” (SL17). At a time when HRD could have stepped forward with a clear plan as to how to align HRD practices with crisis management organisational goals it did not deliver. SL08 sums up senior leader views that HRD displayed a sense of “*learned helplessness*” (SL08) and was seen by the business as “*lacking capability, confidence and remaining in the background*” when it came to strategically aligning HRD practices with the crisis context (SL08). Senior leaders perceived HRD to be “*operating with a level of self-doubt, looking to others to show them what to do*” (SL03) when it came to areas such as culture, talent and leadership in a crisis context, again emphasising the view that HRD was ill-equipped to deal with the crisis.

When asked how HRD could have delivered more value in this post-crisis phase, leaders felt that HRD could have “*played a more forceful role, taking responsibility and ownership rather than waiting for permission*” (SL07). There was a belief amongst senior leaders that HRD lacked crisis management (CM) expertise as illustrated by the statement of SL16, “*HRD should have had a crisis management playbook, for what was required in a situation like this [referring to the crisis]*” (SL16). As a result of not having CM expertise, the view was that rather than having a voice, HRD was seen more as a silent partner.

The relationship between the CEO and the HRD function during the post-crisis period was extensively referenced as an indicator of HRD value. However, participant views differed on the nature of this relationship as to whether HRD was primarily tactical and subservient or more strategic in nature.

One participant, a Chief Risk Officer (SL15) suggested that it would have been difficult for HRD initially to have their voice heard in their organisation given the remit that the CEO had been given to drive significant change, at pace. This leader when questioned further had shared that his organisation had come under further scrutiny from the regulator which had set out specific changes that were required around financial controls and conduct. The result, in their opinion was that change was going to be driven by “*his [CEO’s] way, or no way, agenda*” (SL15). This participant went on to share that the role of the CEO played an important part in the strength of *HRD Voice*, explaining that it restricted HRD rather than enabling a stronger influence:

*HRD became insulated and didn’t come in with a proper proposition. Now the context of all this was an environment of uncertainty and fear and a new CEO who was incredibly directive and autocratic whilst he embarked on a regime of ‘ethnic’ cleansing’.* (SL15)

Another participant (SL03) also had a particularly negative view on the CEO/HRD relationship. Given their role as Head of Branch banking in an Irish Bank, the organisation was subject to specific regulatory directives as the bank had been bailed out by the government. This leader shared his frustrations on the impact of a reduced headcount and branch network, whilst being required to show a positive change in conduct risk issues with less line managers:

*They [HRD] tended to be the lacky for the CEO, taking orders, sorting out operational tasks. They didn't address the loss of talent and became passive and subservient to the CEO/Board. They also weren't seen as being commercially credible and didn't connect beyond email. (SL03)*

However other C-suite participants (SL04, SLO6, SL08, SL13) felt that once the initial chaos had stabilised, the relationship between CEO and HRD was a positive enabler for *HRD Voice*. They saw this relationship strengthen beyond the containment stage into the recovery and renewal stages and in the final theory developed from the findings, *HRD Voice* is explained as developing in its ability to influence and align the HRD agenda with organisational goals (see section 7.9 for a fuller explanation).

From a senior leader's perspective, the need to make time pressured decisions, coupled with a lack of crisis management expertise and the nature of relationship with the CEO impacted *HRD Voice*.

### **5.2.2 Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice: HR/D perspective**

Similar to senior leaders, the initial chaotic nature of the external and internal environments was felt by HR/D practitioners to be a barrier in demonstrating significant strategic value as illustrated by the statement below:

*I think a barrier was that the environment was a bit chaotic at times so there was a lack of organisational clarity because again, understandably so, what direction was the bank going on, was the bank even going to exist and what shape it would take? So, it was very hard then from a learning point of view, to understand and learn what the organisational purpose was and to know what to do from a learning perspective. So, identifying needs and then knowing what the right intervention was, it was tough, you hurt your brain thinking about it. The chaotic context environment was a big barrier. (HRD20)*

Whilst the timeframes differed between organisations, most felt that it was at least 9- 12 months before the initial chaos began to settle enough for leadership to engage in meaningful dialogue around development.

A further barrier to *HRD Voice* was the lack of knowledge of CM practices which limited the ability to align HRD practices with organisational goals. The comments from HR09, a Senior Manager for Learning and Culture, and HRD20, Head of Learning and Development illustrate the lack of CM knowledge within HRD at that time:

*We [HRD] had no blueprint for what to do in a crisis (HRD09)*

*The extent to what we knew about crisis management was the annual disaster recovery plan which focused on IT and buildings, not people and culture (HRD20)*

Several participants who were based in Scotland shared that pre-crisis they were familiar with the concept of High Reliability Organisations (HRO's) due to their proximity with the Oil and Gas industry but previously hadn't seen the applicability of HRO's within the banking industry given the highly technical nature of HRO's.

HRD used external learning consultancies to bridge the gap in their CM understanding of what was required from HRD in a post-crisis context. The view from the five participants who were employees of external learning consultancies interviewed was that HRD was unclear as to how to align HRD practices with CM organisational goals as suggested in the statement below by one of the external learning participants:

*I think they [HRD] were vulnerable, I think they had lost credibility and I don't think they knew how to navigate what they were now finding themselves in. And they looked a lot to us as experts and for guidance and for being ahead of them in terms of the game, I think, they also looked for strength. (ELP01)*

A further barrier to *HRD Voice* in the initial stages of the crisis was the issue of credibility. The statement below is an illustration of how perceptions of HRD were impacted negatively because of the GFC. Assumptions were made, that as a function, HRD had colluded with senior management in creating the environment for unhealthy behaviours to be accepted:

*Our [HRD] brand became tarnished overnight. There was a lack of credibility around our work. People were saying, why should we listen to you? You were part of the system that got us here in the first place. We [HRD] were easy targets for others as it allowed them to shift the focus away from their own contribution to the mess. (HRD13)*

When questioned further on how HRD responded to challenges around their credibility, participants shared that in the early stages of the containment stage, there was a “*need to be seen to be doing something*” (HRD11) to demonstrate their value. Whether this was strategically aligned across the organisation was something that was questionable as illustrated by the statement below from one of the external learning consultancy participants;

*I think that those guys [HRD] were probably feeling the pressure to do something and in some senses I'm not sure a lot of them really knew what they should be doing differently, they just knew that they should be doing something differently and if they were presented with a somewhat half sensible learning solution they'd probably go with it and give it a bash. (ELP03)*

Given the amount of change that was taking place within senior leadership teams and within the HRD function, participants attributed initial post-crisis HRD practices as a means to create an “*impression of [HRD] leadership*” (HRD18) with those who were now in charge of the organisation which suggested a lack of strategic intent from HRD.

Despite these barriers, the containment stage was perceived by HRD as the beginning of developing a strengthening of their relationship with the CEO and senior management teams as they sought to ensure organisational survival and demonstrate to the regulator that as a leadership the mandate for cultural change was being undertaken seriously. The statement below illustrates that the crisis was seen as positive for the relationship between the HRD function and CEO, providing a purpose to engage that it would not have had pre-crisis;

*Suddenly the CEO had a reason to talk to us [laughter], it's like now we are important, to help them get out of the mess that has been created. I really think this was the first time that in my career, I was involved in a learning initiative that was truly led from the Top. (HRD05)*

Overall, the level of “*sponsorship, ownership and advocacy*” (HRD20) from executives regarding HRD practices was thought to be significantly higher than pre-crisis. Access to the CEO was seen as providing legitimacy and credibility to the HRD function.

Summarising the HR/D perspective, whilst the CEO relationship was viewed positively, a chaotic environment, creditability issues and a lack of knowledge of CM initially impacted on HRD Voice.



### 5.2.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [1]: HRD Voice

The containment stage was characterised by a chaotic, time-sensitive environment.

HRD was not prepared for the crisis and without a knowledge of CM responses found itself at times operating in a reactionary mode (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). As such, HRD's role was described by senior leaders as largely silent and lacking in strategic intent. The findings highlight the need for HRD to possess appropriate technical and professional knowledge (Gubbins et al., 2018) such as CM. HR/D participants acknowledged the lack of knowledge of CM principles and sought to re-establish credibility using external learning consultancies to bridge their gap in understanding. Both sets of participants saw the strength of *HRD Voice* develop in the latter stages of the containment stage evidenced by the relationship with the CEO and senior stakeholders. However, there were differing views on whether this relationship with the CEO was strategic in nature or whether HRD were simply carrying out the requests of the senior management and operating in a largely subservient nature. One explanation for these differing views is the extent of change that was required by the regulator within different organisations represented in phase 1 along with a more directive leadership style that focused on operational matters as illustrated by the comments of SL15 and SL03. This again highlights the impact of dynamic business contexts on HRD value (Mitsakis, 2017).

Having discussed *HRD Voice*, I will present the findings that related to the second dynamic HRD role that was displayed in the containment stage, that of *Healer*.

### **5.3 Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: overview**

The GFC created a set of circumstances that impacted the emotional, physical and psychological well-being of organisational members. HRD value as a *Healer* was described by participants as *the ability to support individuals and the organisation through this aftermath*, including the *re-building of trust between employees and senior management*. The use of storytelling in a crisis context was regarded as a valuable HRD activity.

#### **5.3.1 Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: senior leaders' perspective**

The ability of HRD to design and implement practices that served to re-engage the *“hearts & minds’ of staff and helped us heal up”* (SL09) was seen as a valuable contribution. This was measured through the *“relentless focus on improved employee engagement”* (SL06). Participants noted that the immediate aftermath of the crisis left the majority of employees (including senior management) in a state of shock. It was perceived that many employees had no visibility into the magnitude of the problem and the severity in which it would later impact organisational life. Leaders characterised the containment stage as a period of *“corporate trauma”* (SL03), having to lead teams that were *“battle weary and hurting into the next crisis that was lurking round the corner”* (SL05). The majority of senior leaders felt that HRD provided an important sounding board for them as individuals in a business partnering role, and several highlighted that external coaches often with specialist skills in psychology and resilience were made available to them as required. This proximity and accessibility to HRD was seen as positive.

However, a small number of participants reflected on the emotional fall-out that they experienced and asserted that HRD practitioners did not provide appropriate support for their teams. When questioned further on why there wasn't appropriate support in place, participants felt that the pace of change required didn't allow time to adequately pause and reflect on some of the softer elements of the crisis and HRD not making this a priority. The statement from SL01 provides an example of this view:

*So I think if I wrapped it all into one bubble it is post-crisis how an organisation fails to give its people an opportunity to grieve and/or help them with that process of how do you want to respond, these were big areas I didn't see get addressed by our HRD team. (SL01)*

An area that all leaders did feel HRD added value was in supporting them in how to communicate effectively with their teams. This ranged from coaching on how to share and deal with difficult messages, to the cascading of key communications from the senior management and the creation of communication toolkits.

Several participants referenced storytelling as a means by which leaders were encouraged to allow employees to share and make meaning out of the crisis. By providing toolkits to leaders, HRD was seen to add value in helping to re-establish trust and engagement as illustrated in the statement from SL11:

*These sessions [storytelling] were really important to show that we [the leaders] were humans and hurting just like the rest of the staff. I was probably out of my comfort zone, but it was right to sit down and listen to my people. (SL11)*

From senior leaders' perspective, communication tools such as storytelling, along with support mechanisms such as external coaches described the *HRD Healer* role.

### 5.3.2 Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer: HR/D perspective

HR/D practitioners described the containment stage as a period in which employee engagement was at an all-time low with “*issues around breakdown of the psychological contract, engagement and trust*” (HRD23). The following statement highlights the extent to which participants felt a sense of shame and embarrassment:

*It was a hugely challenging time in terms of you wouldn't really tell people who you worked for, you'd get into taxis and you'd say nothing. In our leadership sessions we heard time and time again how folks had stopped going out socially, due to the **huge embarrassment of having to listen to another round of 'banker bashing'**.*

(HRD16)

Participants explained how by using metrics such as engagement surveys and leadership scores, HRD was able to effectively scan the internal environment and provide appropriate practices such as storytelling as a tool to help in the healing process. Similar to senior leaders, storytelling was described by HRD participants as widely deployed as a tool that allowed for emotional issues to be acknowledged and resolved such as guilt, anger, and shame. The following statements highlight the impact that storytelling had on the organisation:

*They [Leadership] were carrying all this guilt and what's the word I would use. That sense of failed, that sense of failure going on in their heads, but what helped was the ability to talk about it. I think what the [name of L&D intervention] probably did was accelerate the conversation so people could draw a line in the sand and move on. I had a 100 people sit on the floor like*

*a nursery school and we told stories about how we felt, about exclusion. It all was very organic and cathartic. (HRD06)*

*Some of the stories that were shared in the room were really vivid for people, so they still had the emotion, the emotion was still there with the story, when they were telling the story you could feel it. I can remember one particular example where it was such a massive personal impact with one of the really senior leaders, it's a story you can't forget. (HRD04)*

A number of the more senior HR/D practitioners shared how they had often played the role as *“part counsellor, part therapist, part coach”* (HRD07) to their leaders as they struggled with the emotional demands of the crisis.

The emotional fall-out of the crisis was also experienced by HR/D practitioners with several participants talking about going through a period of *“soul searching and looking in the mirror”* (HRD14) and *“a profound sense of deep regret”* (HRD18) at what had taken place culturally within the organisation pre-crisis. Assuming a level of responsibility for creating the conditions for the crisis to occur was attributed to *“decreased personal satisfaction in the role”* (HRD09) and a lack of confidence in their ability to act as the *“custodians of the culture”* (HRD11).

Summarising the HRD perspective, extensive use of storytelling was used to make sense of the crisis with employees along with providing specialised support to deal with the emotional impact of the crisis.

### 5.3.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer

Both sets of participants agreed that HRD supported in the re-establishing of employee trust and engagement through a process of effective communication. This was aided through the environmental scanning of business metrics such as engagement surveys. Coaching and development of toolkits were seen as value-add practices. The successful adoption of storytelling was seen as helpful in creating sharing environments and a move away from the autocratic leadership styles present pre-crisis (Eray, 2018; Kopp et al., 2011). Senior leaders saw value in the specialist support that was offered to them through externals such as coaches to deal with issues of resilience and well-being. HRD value was also seen in the personal skills of HRD practitioners in being able to listen to their colleagues, empathise in periods of intense workloads and pressure. However, a small number of leaders felt that emotional support was lacking, caused in part by the pace of change that was required along with such support not being prioritised by HRD, highlighting how the macro and micro environments in a crisis impact on HRD practices.

Having discussed the second dynamic HRD role of *Healer*, the third role that was displayed during the containment stage: *Provocateur* will be discussed next.

### 5.4 Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: overview

The findings showed that as a Provocateur, HRD was able to *promote critical reflection and help align personal and organisational values*. The containment stage provided an opportunity for reflection from organisational members on the role that they had played in creating the crisis. Excessive risk-taking and the relentless pursuit of financial

success were behaviours that needed to be addressed quickly to demonstrate progress to the board, regulator and within the organisation that cultural change was happening.

#### **5.4.1 Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: senior leaders' perspective**

HRD practices in the containment stage caused participants to *“look at themselves in the mirror and reflect on the role that they had played in allowing crisis conditions to develop”* (SL13). The perceived aim of these practices in the immediate aftermath of the crisis were seen as providing a *“shock to the system in an attempt to demonstrate internally that a change in culture was required”* (SL07) and *“externally to the public and regulator, that the industry was taking seriously the impact of the crisis”* (SL10).

Participants in describing the delivery style of these programmes, saw them as *“very aggressive, assertive and highly disruptive and provocative”* (SL14) and *“HRD was clearly briefing the external facilitators on the style and content that was required”* (SL14). A senior Chief Risk Officer, with over 20 years in banking, shared a similar experience describing the learning as *“some of the most uncomfortable learning and development practices in their career”* (SL05), and went on to state;

*It was a very disruptive and uncomfortable experience. Now, that may well have entirely been designed to be so and also unequivocally the facilitators were holding you to account to say ‘do not think that the failure of this organisation is beyond you’, and that was a very tough experience. (SL05)*

The intent behind many of these programmes was perceived by participants as bringing back an awareness of the role of banking within society as a means for good rather than delivering shareholder benefit. The *Renaissance Man* role described in section 5.7 will

provide further examples of how this theme become important as organisations moved into the recovery and renewal stages and redefined a new organisational purpose and values.

Several participants commented that some of their colleagues struggled with these sessions and “*voted with their feet and left before they were shown the door*” (SL17), illustrating how HRD challenged leaders to consider how their personal values aligned with that of the organisation. The ability for HRD to challenge the behaviours that were largely rewarded pre-crisis was seen as a demonstration that HRD has developed more “bite and backbone” (SL19) than it had pre-crisis and suggest that the crisis allowed HRD to be able to challenge more effectively.

Summarising senior leaders’ perspectives shows that the design and delivery of provocative learning practices caused them to critically reflect on their role pre and post-crisis and allowed HRD to play more of a challenger role.

#### **5.4.2 Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur: HR/D perspective**

As noted in earlier sections, the *regulatory landscape* played a significant role in the mandate HRD had post-crisis. Several participants talked about learning modules that were designed to “*make the participant feel uncomfortable*” (HRD11) and “*provoke them to look at themselves in the mirror and take responsibility for their actions*” (HRD16). Using subject matter experts in the form of external learning partners was seen as a way of “*bringing the outside into the Banks*” (HRD21), to disrupt the insular thinking that had existed pre-crisis. The use of external facilitators was also seen a means to overcome some of the barriers to learning such as denial and scapegoating that



were present amongst certain senior leaders. Two HRD participants who were required to take part as participants in these disruptive learning practices due to their seniority shared that it was not just senior leaders who went through a period of “*soul searching and looking in the mirror*” (HRD07) along with “*a profound sense of deep regret*” (HRD21) at what had taken place culturally within the organisation pre-crisis. This reinforces the views from HRD14 and HRD18 from section 5.3.2 which describes how the crisis caused HRD practitioners to critically reflect on the part that had played in the crisis.

Even though HRD acted as a positive provocateur, there was a belief amongst a small number (3 participants), that HRD did not challenge key stakeholders as effectively as they could have. These participants described situations when they had to choose to ignore behaviours that “*were out of line with the organisational stated values*” (HRD15). This choice was perceived as the only option as they felt that the HRD function had little influence to bring about change with “*senior HR professionals colluding with their business counter-parts in not rocking the boat*” (HRD22). When asked to share further, these participants argued that behaviours of certain leaders within their respective organisations were overlooked as they were too important to the organisation and it would create unnecessary attention from the regulator if they were removed. The example shared below from an experienced Senior Manager of Organisational Development (HRD17), illustrates her challenges when acting as a *provocateur*:

*I was left to **hang out to dry**, when I challenged the MD. There was a degree of hypocrisy as there was no appetite for anybody to tackle the problem. I kind of got **stuck in the middle** because I ended up with a boss who didn't want to*

*partner with this individual and that was sort of landed on me and the trouble with that is there was a lack of balance between having probably the most senior person in this part of the bank on one hand and me somewhere down the pecking order in HR with absolutely no power base. Those things make it a little bit harder to do your job and actually, **when you do stick your neck out and you challenge things if you're not going to be supported from the top you're on a hiding to nothing.** (HRD17)*

HR/D perspectives show that as a provocateur they worked with external consultants to design and deliver disruptive learning practices which for the majority of participants allowed them to act in a more challenger role.

### **5.4.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur**

The findings showed that HRD value as *provocateur* was their ability to promote critical reflection on causes for the crisis and stimulate ownership and accountability within leadership. There was agreement that this was achieved through the design of innovative delivery methodologies that dealt with barriers to learning. Senior leaders interpreted such practices as evidence of HRD adopting more of a challenger role, suggesting that the crisis may have been beneficial in providing HRD with a new mandate to challenge. Whilst the ability to challenge was supported by the majority of HRD participants, a small number shared experiences where they felt they were unable to address unproductive leadership behaviours with senior stakeholders. This highlights issues around power, politics and influence which impact HRD (Gold and Bratton, 2014) and how such issues may become more elevated in a post-crisis context (Smith and Elliott, 2007).

## 5.5 Summary: Containment Stage HRD roles

In summarising the containment stage, the findings show that there were mixed perceptions of HRD value as illustrated in the ‘mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the containment stage’ table below (table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the containment stage**

Containment Stage (HRD Role)	HR/D Professionals	Senior Leaders
HRD Voice	-	-
Healer	+	+/-
Provocateur	+/-	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

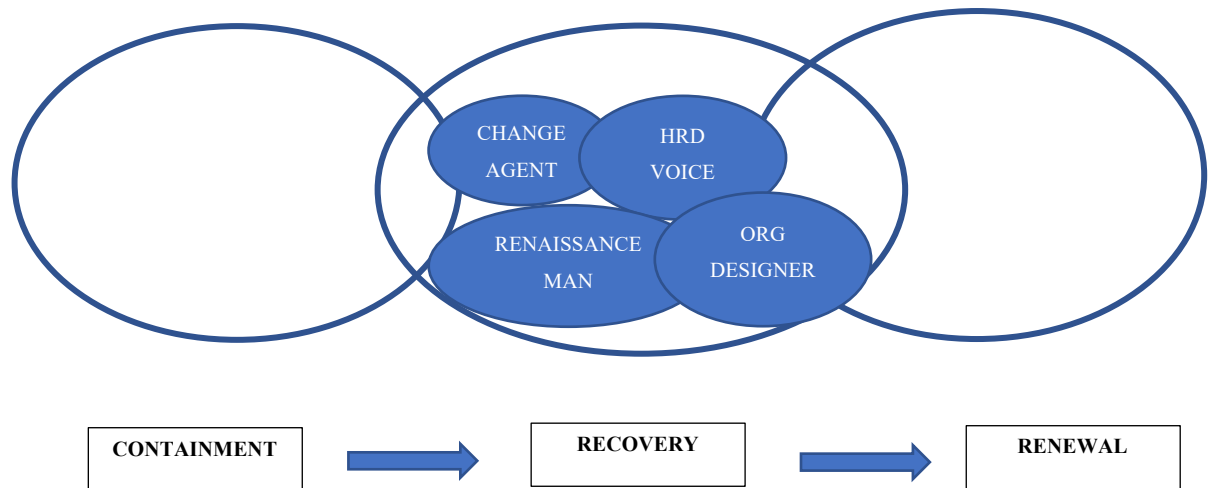
Following the strength of the evidence provided, this was classified as (+) positive perception of adding HRD value, (+/-) neutral perceptions of adding HRD value and (-) negative perceptions of HRD value. A key finding is that HRD Voice was regarded as being largely silent by its lack of CM knowledge and inability to influence strategic goals (Mitsakis, 2017). With the Healer role senior leader perceptions were neutral in their view of HRD based on the impact that ongoing change agendas had on being able to take time to provide meaningful emotional and psychological support. Similarly with the Provocateur role, HR/D professionals had a neutral perception due to the inability of several of those interviewed to impact negative senior leadership behaviours.

Having discussed the three dynamic HRD roles that relate to the containment stage, I will present in the next section findings on *Change Agent*, *Renaissance Man* and *Organisational Designer* which were roles that HRD delivered in the recovery stage of

the crisis. An overview of the main organisational goals of the recovery stage will be presented first.

## **5.6 Recovery Stage: overview**

As organisations moved from containment into recovery this stage was characterised by restructuring practices and a recalibration of organisational purpose and values. The recovery stage saw “*a level of stabilisation*” (HRD20) that created the space for the roll-out of organisational wide culture and leadership programmes. Participants referenced that these HRD initiatives were only now possible as senior leaders had ceased “*fire-fighting*” (HRD02) and had the “*band-width to engage in more comprehensive HRD practices*” (HRD17). This stabilisation allowed HRD to play a role in the design, development and implementation of culture and change initiatives to support crisis management goals. The strengthening relationship with the CEO and senior leadership was seen to continue into the *recovery* stage, now some two to three years on from the initial crisis. Participants saw this as demonstrating further proof of the growing influence of *HRD Voice*. Like the containment stage each dynamic role overlapped with the others as participants described HRD displaying these roles simultaneously and inter-connected with each other. The findings identified that HRD displayed dynamic capabilities in being able to sense, seize and reconfigure itself to respond to the changes in the external and internal environment. Figure 5.3 on the following page shows the dynamic HRD roles associated with the recovery stage.



**Figure 5-3 Recovery Stage and associated dynamic HRD roles**

## **5.7 Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: overview**

As a *Change Agent*, HRD facilitated the *unlearning of pre-crisis behaviours* and culture along with the *preservation of organisation memory* relating to factors that caused the crisis to occur.

### **5.7.1 Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: senior leaders' perspective**

HRD value was described as leading on a series of interventions aimed at supporting change in the context of crisis organisational learning and an attempt to “*re-train the muscle memory so that we have new ways of behaving*” (SL02) which was seen as necessary by all of the participants. The statement by SL04, a Chief Operating Officer is illustrative of the views of senior leaders, describing the change agenda as:

*A blueprint for how we should behave. We understood pretty quickly what went wrong [pre-crisis]. These programmes allowed us to define how we'd learnt from our mistakes and where we were going to hold ourselves to account.*  
(SL04)

In addition to unlearning pre-crisis behaviours, the impact of restructuring and cost-reduction was seen as important for HRD to be aware of and integrate into the change agenda as driven illustrated in the statement below from SL14:

*This period [recovery stage] was all about managing in an agile world, it's about managing and helping lead your people through change and some of that is difficult because you're restructuring on a very regular basis and you're shedding people and you're focusing on probably a smaller number of core priorities. So, the whole cultural programme has been really around equipping people to do that. (SL14)*

The on-going embedding of change programmes throughout the recovery stage was seen as a strong indicator of HRD value. An enabler for this was *HRD Investment* which was discussed Section 4.3. Through this investment, embedding through coaching and follow-up practices was described as “*an indicator that the culture change agenda was a top priority, it was clear that this wasn't your typical sheep-dip learning programme*” (SL12).

One COO described the dilemma of getting the balance between an emphasis on crisis learning and “*not continuing to beat people up over the sins of the past, as something we grappled with at exec level*” (SL08). She went on to say that the use of leadership metrics to demonstrate that learning was taking place, along with a new CEO coming in several years after the crisis helped shift the change narrative from a punitive tone to one that was more future focused.

Whilst the findings showed that HRD as *Change Agents* was seen as a positive activity, two participants SL18 and SL15 felt that HRD operated as mere logistics operators.

SL15 had expressed strong opinions that HRD had defaulted to a project management mindset when dealing with the Senior Manager Conduct Regime (SMCR), (see section 4.2.1). SL18 in discussing *HRD Investment* (section 4.3.1) had expressed cynicism as to the motivation for such investment, seeing it as a proxy to keep the regulator happy. By means of explanation, both leaders' organisations had been under intense regulatory scrutiny, which can help explain some of the contextual reasons for why they might have seen leadership play a more elevated role than HRD in the change agenda as shown in the statement below from SL18:

*So everything around the culture change programme, the communications programme, how do we get staff on board with us, how do we get them to go along on that journey was driven entirely from the executive team with HRD being much more about operations. (SL18)*

One of the CEO's interviewed noted that it was the lack in strategic capability within their HRD executive that resulted in them having to step in and driving the change agenda:

*I couldn't rely on the HRD Director that was there to do it, I'd be looking for someone who was much more of a strategic partner operating alongside execs, challenging exec, not just operationalising whatever the execs take forward. (SL06)*

When questioned further, this leader shared that their HRD Director had joined post-crisis from a smaller organisation and lacked experience in dealing with larger scale change programmes. Having firm experience as an enabler of HRD Value will be discussed further in section 5.8.1 *Organisational Designer*.

Summarising senior leaders' perspectives there was a recognition that crisis learning required new learning to take place that was supported by ongoing *HRD Investment*. A small number (3/20) regarded the HRD role as largely operational.

### **5.7.2 Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent: HR/D perspective**

HRD saw themselves adopting a “*change management role*” (HRD20) during the recovery stage, with their input welcomed by the business as it moved to a new operating model. HRD practitioners leveraged crisis management (CM) principles when designing cultural change programmes that included longer duration programmes spanning up to 24 months along with a focus on measurement and sponsorship from senior management. The statement by HRD08 provides an illustration of the improved CM thinking that was behind HRD acting as a *Change Agent*:

*By this stage [recovery], we'd done our homework in L&D on the crisis case studies. We knew that there was a need to do a bit of work around de-constructing before we could rebuild. It was probably similar to the old Lewin change approach. We built the program in a way that allowed the changes to be embedded as this was not going to happen overnight. (HRD08)*

HRD24 provided a similar perspective that change design principles were thought through by her team to ensure that “*we didn't quickly or conveniently forget all the behaviours that had got us into the mess [meaning the crisis]*”, she went on to say that it was easier to justify the need for longer duration programmes with additional *HRD Investment* during the recovery stage as “*the regulator was breathing down our neck to see what our plans were*” (HRD24).



Similar to senior leaders, the role of *Change Agent* was impacted by the amount of restructuring that was taking place within organisations whilst trying to deliver change agendas as illustrated by HRD15:

*It was hard to stay co-ordinated with the rest of HR with so many re-orgs taking place at the time. We constantly found our programmes having to be paused or having to engage with new stakeholders as teams were merged, or in some cases removed completely. It was a very fluid time for all involved. (HRD15)*

Given the scale of the change agenda, their delivery required significant co-ordination with not only the business but other functions such as the internal communications team. As a result, HRD practices were described by some as becoming quite “*mechanical in nature*” (HRD18) especially from participants who were part of larger organisations.

Summarising HR/D perspectives, adopting a *Change Agent* role involved utilising crisis management principles including the preservation of organisational memory. Change initiatives were impacted by the amount of restructuring within organisations.

### **5.7.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent**

Both sets of participants agreed that HRD value was achieved by adopting a *Change Agent* role and in particular the design principles that drew on crisis management principles. These included programmes that were over a longer than normal duration and elements that ensured organisational memory was maintained (Wang, 2008, James and Wooten, 2010). A barrier to operating as effective *Change Agents* was also identified by the scale and frequency of restructuring programmes that were taking place during the recovery stage. For example, one participant (SL16) shared how he had

to restructure his team eleven times since the GFC. Such impacts resulted in change programmes having to be delayed, rescheduled or re-run which all added to the workload for HRD and may account for the view that at times HRD's role comprised of operational and administrative tasks.

Having described the *Change Agent* role, I will discuss the findings relating to the *Renaissance Man* role in the next section.

## **5.8 Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man: overview**

Participants saw the GFC as a catalyst for banking to re-examine its role in society and re-balance the pre-crisis focus on maximising shareholder value through excessive wealth maximation strategies. As presented in section 5.4.1, this process began through the *Provocateur* role and continued with HRD acting as a '*Renaissance Man*'. This role facilitated an *articulation and embedding of new organisational purpose, culture and associated values/behaviours*.

### **5.8.1 Dynamic HRD Role [5] Renaissance Man: senior leaders' perspective**

Senior leaders shared that their organisations had gone through a process of developing or re-defining a new purpose and values that was incorporated into the cultural change agenda. Participants saw the benefit of this process as a way "*to shake off the mistakes of the past and rebuild for the future*" (SL19).

The views of SL13, a CEO, illustrates how the creation of a new purpose was regarded by leaders as a “*watershed moment in the organisation, signalling an intent as to where we were going and how we were going to act in getting there*”. When probed further on HRD’s role in this process he described it as “*drawing humanity back into decision-making within banking*” (SL13) by focusing on why banking existed, who it was there to support and how it could be more ethical in its decision-making.

This was a view that was widely held amongst the senior leader participants with others describing HRD as acting as the “conscience of the organisation” (SL20).

HRD value was described as the ability to facilitate workshops and design practices that developed a focus on returning to the original purpose of banking as illustrated in the statement below by SL03:

*Previously HRD didn't have permission to challenge the orthodoxies of banking. What we needed from them was to help us diagnose why good people do bad things & help our DNA to become more balanced. They were able to do this in the vacuum created post-crisis. (SL03)*

The above statement of SL03, is a good example of the often-conflicting views that participants had of HRD value. In section 5.2.1, SL03 is critical of HRD and its relationship with the CEO, whereas here in describing a different role of HRD, at a different time within the post-crisis context he shares a more positive view.

Throughout the recovery stage, leaders shared how programmes focused on topics such as authentic leadership, alignment of organisational values and purpose with personal

mission were seen positively by senior leaders. The inter-connectedness of the Dynamic HRD roles was evident as leaders described a willingness to support and endorse the delivery of HRD practices on purpose and values which has been described earlier in Section 5.2 on *HRD Voice*.

In summarising senior leader perspectives relating to the *Renaissance Man* role, HRD value was described as the ability of HRD to design and facilitate programmes that articulated and embedded organisational purpose and values.

### **5.8.2 Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man: HR/D perspective**

Acting as a '*Renaissance Man*', HR/D participants described these set of practices as a "*rebirth*" (HRD06) within banking with a renewed focus on the customer, alongside the drive for ethical decision-making. By bringing alignment between personal and corporate values it "*created permission for people to be themselves in the workplace*" (HRD11). An additional benefit was that it provided a mechanism for individuals to make an informed choice about whether they were onboard with the change in behaviours and if not, could chose to exit as illustrated in the statement below:

*Part of our remit was to make sure that we had an engaged and motivated leadership that was going to take the business forward. We spend a lot of time and money on supporting those at the top of the organisation to reflect on whether their own values aligned with that of the organisation. If they did, great. If not, we [HRD] were very upfront, along with the CEO, that there wasn't going to be a place for them going forward. It was then about how do we manage them out of the business. (HRD22)*

The important role of the CEO in *Renaissance Man* practices was seen in the statement by (HRD21) where their CEO has gone round each of his executive team asking them to

publicly confirm that they were onboard with the leadership programme and were willing to be held accountable for their actions. Speaking about this incident, this senior individual noted “*He [the CEO] was explicitly clear with his team, this was a non-negotiable, it was a ‘are you on the bus or off it’, type moment*” (HRD21).

A different view from one participant on purpose and values was more cynical, describing it as a “*fluffy*” (HRD16) approach that lacked any teeth once leaders went back into the business and was more about “*trying to create some form of engagement with a leadership population that wasn’t going to be paid any bonuses for the foreseeable future*” (HRD16).

Several HRD participants contributed the positive impact of ‘*Renaissance Man*’ practices as a driver for their own engagement as illustrated by HRD24 who described these practices as a “*beacon of light in an otherwise dark period*” (HRD24). He went on to explain that the external pressures from the regulator and continued public inquiries into his own organisation, along with the aggressive change agenda internally had a negative impact on his own engagement.

In adopting a *Renaissance Man* role, HRD participants were able to support a greater alignment of personal and corporate values (including their own) which was role modelled by the CEO.

### **5.8.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man**

Participants highlighted the value of HRD's role in the creation and operationalisation of new organisational purpose and values with a greater focus on the customer and more ethical decision-making. These practices were seen to bring greater alignment of personal and corporate values, drive engagement and support HRD in being able to challenge unproductive behaviours (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Both sets of participants were able to share examples where the CEO acted as a positive role model for the new culture, reinforcing how this relationship and the strength of *HRD Voice* continued to grow within the recovery stage. The findings also suggest that the crisis was an enabler for HRD to act in more of a challenger role that it had done pre-crisis using the new values as a means to hold organisational members to account. The final role in the recovery stage that of *Organisational Designer* describes how HRD effectively co-ordinated the complexity of change, culture and regulator driven initiatives.

## **5.9 Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: overview**

HRD value was seen in their ability to *understand the limitations of prior structures* and *partnership with the wider HR function* in the creation of *new organisational structures and processes* that aligned with crisis management goals.

### **5.9.1 Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: senior leaders' perspective**

A feature of the *Organisational Designer* role was described as the firm experience of HRD practitioners who had been part of the business pre-crisis now supporting post-crisis practices. When questioned further this was viewed as HRD's ability to *"understand what went wrong before and hold us to account for not making the same*

*mistakes going forward*” (SL14). Whilst there had been significant change in many of the leadership teams, and a desire to develop a new culture, HRD having firm experience was seen as desirable as illustrated by SL20:

*With a change at Exco, you still had many of that next level in role. Some of whom needed convincing on the need to change. I think the team [HRD] did a good job of educating ExCo on what had worked previously and what needed to be changed. I don't think you would have got that if some of these guys hadn't been here previously. (SL20)*

The context of SL20's example helps explain their viewpoint and was a common view held by senior leaders. The regulator had provided a set of changes that the organisation was required to work through. With new executive members joining the HRD team was able to “join the dots up” (SL10) in explaining to these new members how the HRD practices supported the required regulatory change.

The capability to be able to scan both the internal and external environments and provide solutions that helped to bypass barriers was seen as helpful by senior leaders. The example shared by SL06 in section 5.6.1 where the HRD Director had only recently joined the organisation shows the impact of not having firm knowledge when attempting to drive the change agent post-crisis.

However, when examining firm knowledge, it does again show the conflicting views senior leaders held regarding HRD. The earlier section 5.2.2 on *HRD Voice* notes that HRD received criticism for helping to create the conditions for the crisis to occur, yet in this context, which was describing the recovery stage, their pre-crisis experience is now seen as beneficial.

By operating as an *Organisational Designer*, senior leaders recognised the need for co-ordination and collaboration between HRD and more general HRM practices. This was due to the continued re-structuring that characterised the recovery stage as banks adapted to changes in customer and market behaviours and adopted new target operating models. When questioned on the HRM practices where HRD had the most impact, *'performance and reward'* was the most frequently described. When leaders were asked for further clarification, the post-crisis era had a focus on addressing excessive banker bonuses which were a feature pre-crisis. As a result, it was important that individuals were clear on how performance was measured and in turn, how this would be rewarded. For further context, several of those interviewed shared that their salaries and bonus structures had been the subject of public press attention. The statement by SL16 is illustrative of the role that HRD played in performance and reward:

*During that time [recovery stage], there was a key drive from the [HRD] team to make sure that we as leaders were clear that we were being measured and rewarded not just on our usual metrics but also on our leadership scores. This was a significant shift. (SL16)*

Other leaders noted that there was an increased *"emphasis and visibility on your own leadership scores and employee surveys"* (SL02), with the need to demonstrate that change was taking place to the regulator and employees. Two of the CEO's interviewed (SL13, SL06) described the HRD/HRM metrics that they received as *"invaluable in signposting the recovery journey we were on to the Board"* (SL06) and *"a means to listen and engage with the staff on areas where we needed to improve and not just pay lip-service to"* (SL13) which is consistent with the comments in section 4.3.1 highlighting how HRD used metrics to secure *HRD Investment*.



In summarising the experiences of senior leaders, they recognised the value of HRD working in partnership with the wider HR function to ensure processes were coordinated and integrated. Furthermore, firm knowledge was regarded as an enabler of CM goals in understanding the limitations of pre-crisis structures and processes.

### **5.9.2 Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer: HR/D perspective**

As an *Organisational Designer*, HRD scanned the external environment and integrated this information with their firm experience to inform HRD practices. Specific examples shared included processes such as introducing skip-level meetings, developing decision-making toolkits and the creation of a more open culture. These were in response to recommendations from the regulator to reduce siloed decision-making and create greater accountability. The example shared by one of the most senior HRD participants, HRD21 a Chief People Officer, illustrates how firm knowledge supported a leadership programme:

*I told my guys, all this stuff [new culture] will die on the vine very quickly, if we aren't smart in terms of working out how it is going to land in our particular context with the personalities at play. (HRD21)*

His belief was that his team's prior experience was an enabler to ensure that the organisational goals were achieved. One of the external learning partners in dealing with HRD21 also noted that when working on a leadership programme, they were taken through an exercise with the HRD team who talked through what had worked previously, what hadn't and who the key influencers would be to make sure that the learning was a success:

*This guy [referring to HRD 21] was switched on. He said to us, the programme is great but what we must deal with are the pathogens in this organisation. It definitely had an impact on our approach and design after listening to him. (ELP05)*

HR/D participants had a similar view to that noted by senior leaders on the importance of partnership with HRM practices. When asked to share examples, they described their role in the development and implementation of the structures, processes and communication around leadership surveys, 360's, engagement surveys and performance management. The fact that performance was linked to behaviours rather than pre-crisis metrics such as revenue was seen as an enabler for HRD practices and evidence of the strategic nature of HRD in delivering against organisational goals. When questioned on the nature of the relationship with the wider HR function, participants felt that there was a better alignment between HRD and HRM objectives.

Whilst the crisis created opportunities for more effective partnership and alignment between HRD/HRM, participants shared how they used centralisation initiatives as an opportunity to create a stronger HRD identity through the creation of centres of excellence that included the development of academies, leadership hubs and faculties. HRD10, a Director of Talent and Development was of the view that whilst it was important for better HRD/HRM alignment, it was also important to create separation from the general HR function:

*And I think there's something around the [HRD brand], you have to brand yourself, if you don't brand yourself you become caught up in HR. So we've developed a standalone brand - The Academy. It's a really strong brand something that people can relate to and go, oh my god, this looks really different and understand what this means for me in terms of my development. (HRD10)*

The views of HRD10 were supported by other participants, who when probed on the motivation behind creating a stronger HRD identity shared that they had intentionally attempted to distance themselves from the HR function as it was generally perceived to be largely “*subservient and tactical to the business*” (HRD20).

In summarising HR/D’s perspectives, firm experience was seen as beneficial in integrating regulatory issues that were picked up from environmental scanning along with a requirement to establish better partnerships and closer alignment with HRM practices.

### **5.9.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer**

The findings showed that both set of participants regarded the pre-crisis experience of HRD as being important in helping to understand how best to navigate the organisational environment to deliver the required change. HR/D participants in particular were able to identify that firm experience allowed them to be more cognisant of internal and external signals that could be barriers to crisis learning (Zagelmeyer and Gollan, 2012). However, it does show the difficult position HRD faces where on the one hand senior leaders were criticising HRD for helping to create the crisis and then suggesting that having the very same people in place post-crisis was advantageous. This practical implication for HRD will be discussed further in Chapter 9. Both sets of participants saw the value in HRD working in partnership with the wider HR function, specifically in regard to performance management along with the process and communication around various cultural metrics such as leadership scores. Whilst alignment with HRM was seen as important, a number of HRD practitioners saw the opportunity through various rationalisation programmes to create a stronger brand and

identity than pre-crisis. This suggests that crisis could be an enabler for the strengthening of the HRD brand if it can demonstrate its strategic value in supporting crisis management goals.

### 5.10 Summary: Recovery Stage HRD roles

In summarising the recovery stage, the findings show that there were mixed perceptions of HRD value as illustrated in the ‘mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the recovery stage’ table below (table 5.2).

**Table 5.2 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the recovery stage**

Recovery Stage (HRD Role)	HR/D Professionals	Senior Leaders
HRD Voice	+/-	+/-
Change Agent	+	+/-
Organisational Designer	+	+/-
Renaissance Man	+	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

Following the strength of the evidence provided, this was classified as (+) positive perception of adding HRD value, (+/-) neutral perceptions of adding HRD value and (-) negative perceptions of HRD value. The findings show that HRD Voice elevated in the recovery stage by developing stronger stakeholder relationships and the delivery of the other dynamic HRD roles. There were neutral perceptions of HRD as a change agent by senior leaders due to pressures of ongoing business as usual change initiatives.

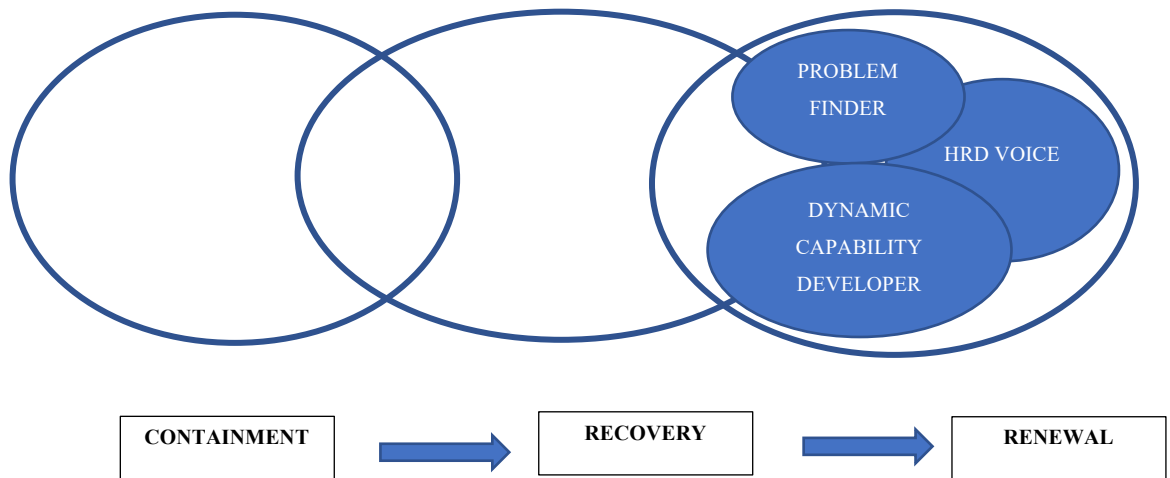
Similarly, there were mixed perceptions between the two stakeholder groups regarding

the organisational designer role with HRD pre-crisis experience being seen as both an enabler and barrier to value. Both sets of stakeholders positively perceived the renaissance man role as adding value in articulating and defining new organisational purpose.

Having discussed the dynamic HRD roles that relate to the recovery stage, in the next section I will present findings on the final two dynamic roles, *Problem Finder and Dynamic Capability Developer*, which were displayed by HRD in the renewal stage of the crisis.

### **5.11 Renewal stage: overview**

As organisations progressed through the recovery into renewal stage, HRD value was attributed to on-going culture practices such as embedding learning and building organisational capabilities that aligned with crisis management goals. The findings highlighted that HRD practitioners were seen as being more proactive in scanning and evaluating changes in the internal and external environments than they were pre-crisis. Participants explained these value-add practices as identifying issues that may have threatened competitive advantage such as changes in regulation along with advances in technology and consumer behaviour. Compared to HRD in the containment stage, where HRD was seen to be largely reactionary, the findings showed that HRD was at the forefront of ensuring that crisis learning was not forgotten. Figure 5.4 on the following page shows that HRD value was attributed to two dynamic HRD roles, *Problem Finder and Dynamic Capability Developer*.



**Figure 5-4 Renewal Stage and associated dynamic HRD roles**

## **5.12 Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: overview**

The findings showed that the *Problem Finder* role was associated with HRD displaying dynamic capabilities that were *proactive in scanning, evaluating and acting on changes in the external and internal environments which could prove to be a threat or opportunity for competitive advantage*. Rather than waiting for the business to come with problems needing solved, the problem finder role was described as being more proactive than in the pre-crisis years.

### **5.12.1 Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: senior leaders' perspective**

In describing the *Problem Finder* role leaders felt they were having more productive conversations with their HRD business partners that focused on "*threats and opportunities*" (SL11) relating to the changing banking landscape than what happened pre-crisis. Changes in consumer behaviour with a shift to online banking, along with tighter regulation around financial products that the banks sold, combined with the rise

of Fintech's as disruptors to traditional banking were all cited as examples of changes that leaders and HRD had to navigate.

The example from one of the CEO's (SL13) highlights what leaders found valuable as HRD operated as a *Problem Finder*: "*We are having conversations about real problems, like how to ensure the team is positioned for a digital agenda*" (SL13). He went on to suggest that:

*This feels different to previous [pre-crisis] learning and development, which was more general leadership best practice. Now we have very focused initiatives that make sense with the changes in the external market. (SL13)*

These conversations were seen as evidence by senior leaders that HRD had evolved and developed into a more effective business partner by being able to scan the external environments as illustrated by SL17:

*I have been pretty hard on HRD over the years but I feel more confident in the team now that they are joining the dots between what goes on externally and how this needs to be translated into developing capabilities within the organisation.*

This same leader had previously described HRD as being largely absent during the containment stage (section 4.2.1) and demonstrates how perceptions of HRD changed based on different organisational needs at each point with the crisis sequence.

In addition to scanning the external environment, the *Problem Finder* role saw HRD continue to scan the internal environment to ensure that in the *renewal* stage there was an ongoing alignment and embedding of learning initiatives with the lessons learnt from the *containment* and *recovery* stages. The statement from SL14 who managed a large commercial team illustrates this view;

*HRD practised what they preached. We had it drummed into us about the importance of creating space for weak signals to emerge and it was good to see the team [HRD] not let up in making sure that we didn't become stale in this regard. There was a relentless focus on feedback and demonstration that all voices were getting heard. (SL14)*

In summarising senior leader's description of the *Problem Finder* role, HRD was seen as being able to scan and interpret changes in both the external and internal environments, resulting in more productive business partnering.

### **5.12.2 Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder: HR/D perspective**

By the time organisations had progressed to the *renewal* stage, HRD recognised the importance of scanning and understanding changes in external and internal environments as illustrated by the statement of HRD22:

*I use the 'sleeping at the wheel' metaphor quite a bit with my team as a reminder of what happens when we [HRD] don't pay attention to those cultural red flags and when we don't pay attention to what is happening on the bigger picture within the global markets. (HRD22)*

As a Head of Organisational Development, she had a large team working across several divisions and went on to explain that her team had developed specific professional



development KPI's to ensure that the HRD team gained broader knowledge and understanding of changes in banking regulation. Other participants had used similar approaches to ensure that they had the relevant regulatory knowledge to position HRD initiatives to leverage competitive advantage.

Similar to the views from senior leaders, HR/D practitioners felt that they were able to have more productive conversations with the business based on their ability to decipher environmental changes and translate these into HRD practices. Being able to raise these potential problems early with the business and provide solutions was seen as demonstrating HRD value as illustrated by HRD14 describing the interactions that took place as *“a clear indicator that we [HRD] were on the front foot when it came to being a strategic partner”* (HRD14). The use of metrics from leadership and engagement surveys, 360's and feedback and benchmarking reports from external learning partners on topics such as digital skills and banking were all described as useful in helping to identify areas of development for the organisation. HR/D participants thought that by the time they had entered the *renewal* stage that the *“heavy lifting around the change and culture agenda was done”* (HRD01) which created more time and space for HRD to spend on leveraging opportunities that presented themselves due to external environmental scanning.

In summarising HR/D perspectives, they described the use of metrics and KPIs focused on environmental changes to develop their own dynamic capabilities as practitioners to understand and act on environmental changes resulting in more effective strategic business partnering (Mitsakis, 2017, Garavan et al., 2016).

### 5.12.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder

Both sets of participants acknowledged an improved ability of HRD to sense, seize and act on environmental changes (Garavan et al., 2016). This was evidenced in the quality and nature of conversations that were taking place between management and HRD. For senior leaders, this provided a reassurance that HRD was paying attention to market changes and planning accordingly.

For HRD the *Problem Finder* role identified the importance of HRD developing their own scanning capabilities that allowed for the early detection of issues and opportunities. The findings showed that HRD also made use of a range of internal and external metrics to help understand areas of threat/opportunity whilst also developing their knowledge of issues facing the banking industry more broadly such as regulation changes and the digital agenda. The implication of HRD developing and maturing its own set of dynamic capabilities will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

I will discuss the second Dynamic HRD role that HRD fulfilled in the renewal stage, *Dynamic Capability Developer* in the next section.

### 5.13 Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: overview

Whilst the *Problem Finder* role relates to the characteristics of the HRD function, the *Dynamic Capability Developer* role was explained as HRD practitioners ***developing dynamic capabilities at individual and organisational level to achieve competitive advantage in dynamic environments***. Participants shared examples of strategic initiatives that were centred around agile thinking whilst maintaining a crisis mindset and supporting senior leadership in understanding trends of the future.

### **5.13.1 Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: senior leaders' perspective**

Leaders interpreted organisational decision-making capabilities in the renewal stage as being “*more innovative*” (SL15), “*less bureaucratic*” (SL20) and “*better designed to deal with change*” (SL03) than the containment and recovery stages. When questioned on the role that HRD had played in developing these capabilities, leaders referred to various learning initiatives such as the use of sense-making toolkits, implementation of new management practices such as daily stand-ups, coaching feedback practices and team effectiveness sessions.

For example, SL09 described how his organisation had adopted a sense-making tool that required every decision that was being made to be run through a series of filter questions to assess the quality of the decision:

*We used this simple template where you were required to ask a series of questions such as ‘how will this decision be viewed in 10 years? How does it align with the needs of the customer? It was transformative in allowing other perspectives to enter the decision-making process. I know other banks were using similar tools as it became very popular. (SL09)*

This type of toolkit was also referenced by other participants and was called out specifically in the BankCo as useful in implementing decision-making changes that were required by the regulator (see section 6.15.2).

Senior leaders shared how they intentionally conducted more ‘skip-level’ meetings with their teams to hear different perspectives than they would normally have done pre-crisis.

The belief was that there benefit in getting “*an increased focus on the wisdom of the crowds*” (SL01) rather than senior management “*sitting in their ivory tower, as they did previously*” (SL16). The statement from SL15, a Chief Risk Officer shows how they applied this skip-level practice to their team environment illustrating the influence of HRD in affecting leadership behaviour:

*HRD did a good job in sharing best practice from other industries on what it meant to constantly be scanning the horizon. I was definitely more intentional with my team in asking more questions and probing for other explanations rather than accepting things at face value. I'd go and sit with the team more than I'd ever done just to get a feel for things. (SL15)*

The views of SL15 again shows the positive change in attitude towards HRD, as this leader had previously described HRD as defaulting to a project management mindset (section 5.6.1) and lacking in business understanding (section 4.2.1) in the *containment* stage.

Several leaders referred to the adoption of practices such as ‘agile’ and ‘design thinking’ across their organisations as good examples of how HRD was continuing to bring fresh approaches from other industries such as technology into banking which was in contrast to the pre-crisis ‘bounded mindset’ that had existed. Further questioning sought to understand what the drivers were for these practices, ie were they related to the crisis or simply a response to changes in banking. The view from leaders was that it was both. Banks were required by the regulator to continue focusing on ways to improve decision-making and that the lessons learnt had not been forgotten. At the same time, they needed to adapt to shifting consumer behaviour otherwise they could find themselves back in another crisis.

In summarising senior leader perspectives, practices at the individual and organisational level that developed capabilities to interpret and respond to changes in the external and internal environment were seen as valuable.

### **5.13.2 Dynamic HRD Role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer: HR/D perspective**

There was a belief within HR/D participants that by the renewal stage they better understood environmental scanning CM practices such as sensemaking and how to apply them within the organisation. Having a better understanding of crisis management capabilities allowed HRD to develop and design processes and practices that *“allowed the organisation to identify, assess and deal with on-going threats and opportunities”* (HRD15) and integrate this into on-going management practices. HRD17 described how her organisation had initiated a management practice of *“a daily stand-up within teams as a means of early identification of issues”*. This created not only a process to sense what was going on in the external and internal environments but also allowed teams to be able to act swiftly so that they could act on these opportunities. This process was adopted and rolled out from the senior management to demonstrate executive sponsorship, and buy-in which provides further examples of how *HRD Voice* continued to strengthen several years on from the initial crisis event and was an enabler to other dynamic HRD roles.

HRD22 described using a similar process but having to adjust the frequency from daily to weekly as it had lost some of its impact. Other participants shared how the use of metrics and feedback from such initiatives were useful in understanding when *“an intervention had run its course and was due a freshen up”* (HRD03), demonstrating how HRD continued to scan the internal environment and adapt accordingly.

The development of 'agile' practices was also seen as evidence that HRD was adapting to changes in the external environment. When probed further on the rationale for 'agile', the view was similar to that of senior leaders. In part it was due to demonstrating ongoing learning as a result of the crisis, whilst "*developing a set of capabilities that the organisation needed to be able to compete in the new world of fintech*" (HRD13)

Similar to senior leaders, the use of coaching was described by HRD participants as a key enabler for developing a more effective culture of feedback, critical reflection and learning. HRD22's statement provides a good example of the effectiveness of coaching in developing CM capabilities:

*We have been really emphasising the roll-out of our coaching model across the business. I think it has shifted us from a 'command and control leadership' to a more curious mindset. We've needed to really work with our leaders to be comfortable with this. It's not their default, but if you look at what got us here [the crisis], then it's a no-brainer that we have got to ask more questions rather than just telling people what to do.* (HRD22)

The overall view from HR/D practitioners was that the ability to question and challenge managerial decision-making was stronger than pre-crisis which was interpreted as a maturing of dynamic capabilities within the organisation.

Summarising the views of HR/D participants, a better understanding of CM principles supported HRD in adopting a *Dynamic Capability Developer* role as evidenced by the development of various sensemaking and reflexive practices and toolkits.

### 5.13.3 Summary: Dynamic HRD Role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer

Both sets of participants described HRD value as the ability to develop tools and processes that supported individual and organisational capabilities to understand and act on changes within the external and internal environments (Garavan et al., 2016). These were seen to align with organisational goals that sought to ensure crisis learning was preserved. Given the changing context of banking, such as changes in consumer behaviour and challenges from Fintech, stakeholder expectations were that HRD developed capabilities that would enable on-going competitive advantage. The use of coaching was regarded as a key tool in helping to develop dynamic capabilities with widespread application especially in promoting reflexive critique of behaviours.

### 5.14 Summary: Renewal Stage HRD roles

In summarising the renewal stage, the findings show that there were shared positive perceptions of HRD value as illustrated in the ‘shared perceptions of HRD roles in the renewal stage’ table below (table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 Shared perceptions of HRD roles in the renewal stage**

Renewal Stage (HRD Role)	HR/D Professionals	Senior Leaders
HRD Voice	+	+
Problem Finder	+	+
Dynamic Capability Developer	+	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

The findings show that HRD Voice elevated in the renewal stage by enhancing stakeholder relationships and the delivery of the other dynamic HRD roles. There were positive perceptions of HRD as a problem finder as HRD developed greater dynamic capabilities in being pro-active to perceived environmental changes. Similarly, there were shared positive perceptions between the two stakeholder groups regarding the dynamic capability developer role with HRD being seen to develop DCs within the organisation such as the introduction of ‘agile’ methodology and practices.

### **5.15 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented the significant findings from phase 1 of the study regarding the micro environment of crisis stages and the associated dynamic HRD roles (Fig 5.1 section 5.0) within each stage. Whilst there were differences between the two stakeholder groups on the nature of HRD value the findings show that HRD value post-crisis is seen in its ability to operate several dynamic roles simultaneously.

The containment stage with a focus on lessening the impact of the crisis and ensuring survival saw the importance of HRD being able to provide support for those dealing with the emotional and psychological effects of the GFC by adopting a *Healer* role (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Holding the mirror up to senior leaders to understand why the crisis occurred saw HRD adopt a *Provocateur* role. Finally, within the containment stage, *HRD Voice* was seen in its ability to rebuild credibility with senior management and key stakeholders. There was an acknowledgment that in the containment stage, HRD had limited understanding of CM which impacted its ability to act strategically and support organisational goals (Hutchins and Wang, 2008).



Within the recovery stage, organisational goals focused on redefining the purpose and values of organisations and returning the business to a pre-crisis condition. As a *Change Agent*, continued unlearning of pre-crisis behaviours continued and the development of new organisational purpose and values through *Renaissance Man* practices helped to rebuild employee engagement. With the variety of CM practices that were taking place, HRD was required to operate as an *Organisational Designer* to ensure that the appropriate structures, processes and communications were in place to achieve organisational objectives (Hutchins and Wang, 2008). *HRD Voice* became more elevated in the recovery stage as HRD gained a greater understanding of CM goals and aligned their practices with the strategic outlook of the organisation (Mitsakis, 2017).

With the renewal stage, the focus was on maintaining crisis learning and repositioning for growth and competitive advantage (James and Wooten, 2010). HRD developed a more proactive approach to environmental scanning through the *Problem Finder* role. CM capabilities such as sense-making and reflexive practice were developed at individual and organisational level as demonstrated by the *Dynamic Capability Developer* role (Garavan et al., 2016). Participants observed that *HRD Voice* was stronger by the time organisations had entered into the renewal stage. The findings show that *HRD Voice* was further strengthened through the two dynamic roles and the increasing ability to bring influence to the organisations strategic outlook (Holbeche, 2009; Mitsakis, 2021).

In summarising the recovery stage, the findings show that there were mixed perceptions of HRD value as illustrated in the ‘mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the post-crisis stages’ table on the following page (table 5.4).

**Table 5.4 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles in the post-crisis stages**

<b>Containment Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	-	-
Healer	+	+/-
Provocateur	+/-	+
<b>Recovery Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	+/-	+/-
Change Agent	+	+/-
Organisational Designer	+	+/-
<b>Renewal Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	+	+
Problem Finder	+	+
Dynamic Capability Developer	+	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

Following the strength of the evidence provided, this was classified as (+) positive perception of adding HRD value, (+/-) neutral perceptions of adding HRD value and (-) negative perceptions of HRD value.

The phase 1 findings highlight that stakeholder expectations of HRD vary based on the crisis stage the organisation is in. Other contextual factors identified in the phase 1 findings were the extent to which an organisation was under more scrutiny from the

regulator, size of the organisation and the agenda of the CEO along with their orientation to development. The next chapter will present the BankCo findings providing an opportunity for differences from the phase 1 findings to be examined within one organisational context and includes the views of other stakeholder groups (middle management and front-line staff).

## **6 Chapter 6 BankCo case study findings**

In this chapter I present the research data of significant findings from phase 2 of the study which consisted of 15 interviews with senior leaders and HR/D practitioners along with two focus groups comprising of 17 middle management and front-line staff within a UK Bank. As noted in chapter 3, the BankCo organisation was a UK Bank comprised of several divisions. As one of the largest UK banks, post GFC it had received significant public scrutiny from public enquiries and the popular press. As a result of the GFC there had been a change in leadership and the organisation was forced to recapitalise to ensure ongoing financial viability. Presenting these findings as a separate chapter helps to provide the reader with a ‘thick description’ of HRD value within one organisation and provides further depth and understanding on some of the conflicting views that were present in the phase 1 findings.

The views of line management and front-line staff from the focus groups helps address the research question; ‘*how do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context*’. Their views provide further explanation of how HRD initiatives were experienced and interpreted within one organisation. Similar to the phase 1 findings there were conflicting views between BankCo stakeholder groups when describing HRD value. It is important to note that some issues linked to the same HRD practices and roles were interpreted differently by the various stakeholder groups, reinforcing the complexities and divisions that exist between stakeholder groups on the question of HRD value (Mitsakis, 2017). The BankCo findings provided further understanding on how pre-crisis HRD practices impacted their creditability along with a lack of business understanding and crisis management principles. It explained the important role of organisational purpose in allowing the organisation to move forward

and the role that HRD practices played in embedding crisis learning. Table 6.1 below provides a detailed overview of how the BankCo findings provided further explanation and understanding of issues that developed from phase 1 which will be discussed in this chapter.

**Table 6.1 Mapping phase 1 and BankCo findings**

Phase 1	BankCo
<b>Regulatory Landscape</b>	
Senior leaders in different organisations perceived a missed opportunity for HRD to act strategically with regulatory demands	Within the BankCo the missed opportunity was explained further by lack of understanding of regulation due to lack of business knowledge within HRD which impacted strategic input in early stages of crisis
Concerns raised by HR/D participants over the impact of mandatory training on HRD ‘brand’ effectively dumbing down HRD practices	The focus groups took a more pragmatic view that mandatory training was a requirement given the scrutiny from regulator and it wasn’t seen as impacting the HRD brand
Some examples shared from senior leaders of coaching support to deal with demands of the regulator	The BankCo HRD team responded by setting up a dedicated coaching panel to support senior leaders which was seen as a value-add practice
<b>HRD Investment</b>	
HRD Investment seen as indicator of value from all phase 1 participants in times of cost-cutting	Further understanding provided from all stakeholders within a single organisation of how budgets were a yardstick by which stakeholders measured HRDs value given the era of cost-cutting
The motivation for HRD Investment was questioned by some participants as a means to simply satisfy the regulator and be seen to do something	The personal endorsement from the CEO and his pro development orientation were seen as the main motivators for HRD Investment. Along with this a more forward-focused mindset developed by a new organisational purpose helped in securing HRD Investment
Senior leaders had raised concerns about the quality of business partnering with line manager duties being impacted by HRD downsizing	The focus groups provided positive examples of toolkits to support line managers in dealing with additional HRD duties

<b>HRD Voice</b>	
HRD Voice in the containment stage was impacted by lack of credibility with HRD being associated with supporting pre-crisis behaviours	The focus groups and senior leaders provided further explanation of the pre-crisis role that HRD played which was viewed as tactical rather than strategic
HRD Voice in the initial stage of the crisis impacted by lack of crisis management knowledge	Participants provided further explanation that pre-crisis crisis management with HRD had been restricted to disaster planning rather than environmental scanning. However, there were detailed examples of how this knowledge developed over the crisis period
The importance of the CEO relationship with HRD was seen as an enabler for HRD Voice.	Within the BankCo, the symbolic nature of the HR reporting line to CEO provided further understanding of the nature of the CEO/HRD relationship and sent clear message to the organisation of its value and position
<b>Healer</b>	
Phase 1 finding identified that providing emotional and psychological support were important HRD practices	The BankCo participants provided detailed examples of HRD developing a dedicated coaching panel along with the use of storytelling to make sense of the crisis. A further example of HRD supporting employees working within the distressed business unit provided an in-depth understanding of the Healer role.
<b>Provocateur</b>	
There were mixed views on HRD's ability to challenge post-crisis	Participants were able to provide example of the pro-active management of 'bad actors' out of organisation and referenced the CEO relationship as an enabler for HRD to challenge more effectively
<b>Change Agent</b>	
There were examples of tensions that HRD needed to manage in delivering the change agenda	Senior leaders provided further understanding of the tensions within the BankCo of preserving organisational memory whilst not holding onto painful memories
<b>Renaissance Man</b>	
Phase 1 participants provided examples of re-defining their organisational purpose and values	Participants provided detailed examples of how the rearticulation of a new organisational purpose signalled a shift in the crisis journey from looking back to moving forward. Within the focus groups this was experienced as a change in the type

	of development they received with more customer-based training being offered
<b>Organisational Designer</b>	
Participants had shared examples of how firm experience was an enabler in understanding the weakness of pre-crisis structures and processes	BankCo participants were able to provide further understanding of the paradox of firm experience. On the one hand, HRD has been associated with allowing pre-crisis behaviours to remain unchallenged, however understanding the organisation and where it had gone wrong in the past was seen as an enabler for navigating barriers to learning
<b>Problem Finder</b>	
Phase 1 had shown that HRD had matured in developing dynamic capabilities within the HRD function	Participants were able to provide detailed examples of how HRD had developed dynamic capabilities with their function and how they had adopted several CM practices.
<b>Dynamic Capability Developer</b>	
Phase 1 findings provided examples of the role that HRD played in developing dynamic capabilities	Detailed examples that were provided allowed for better understanding of how the use of decision-making toolkits and programmes such as 'agile' supported the development of dynamic capabilities especially with line managers.

Given the overlap in findings between both phases of the study and to aid the reader in being able to understand how the phase 2 findings contributed to the final substantive theory, this chapter will illustrate specific findings that draw out such points of difference and help further explain through 'thick descriptions' the influencing social processes that help understand how HRD added value in the post-crisis context.

## 6.1 Chapter structure

Similar to chapters 4 and 5, presentation of the findings is framed according to the emergent substantive theory to show how the 13 major core categories developed into the theory. As an aid to the reader the core categories are listed in Table 6.2 on the

following page, grouped into three themes: *Macro Environment*, *Micro Environments* and *Dynamic HRD roles*.

**Table 6.2 Core categories mapped to themes (b)**

Themes	Core Category
Macro Environment	Regulatory Landscape
Micro Environments	Crisis Stages (Containment, Recovery, Renewal) HRD Investment
Dynamic HRD roles	HRD Voice, Healer, Provocateur, Change Agent, Organisational Designer, Renaissance Man, Problem Finder, Dynamic Capability Developer

The remainder of the chapter presents the findings as they relate to the categories that make up the substantive theory of HRD value post-crisis beginning with the macro environment of *Regulatory Landscape*.

## **6.2 Macro environment: regulatory landscape**

The views of participants within the BankCo provided a more in-depth understanding of the impact of HRD's lack of business knowledge, specifically relating to regulation being seen as a barrier to strategic HRD in dealing with new regulatory demands as summarised above in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). HRD practitioners from phase 1 expressed concern that the amount of mandatory training impacted HRD value, however the findings from the BankCo, specifically with the focus groups comprising of middle management and front-line staff showed that such training was regarded as warranted given the regulatory context. The BankCo findings also show that coaching was helpful for leaders in ensuring they were supported in dealing with the demands of the



regulator. The general view from BankCo participants was that the regulatory landscape provided HRD with a mandate that hadn't existed pre-crisis.

### **6.2.1 HRD's lack of business understanding impacting strategic input into regulatory issues**

Phase 1 findings highlighted a barrier to HRD value was their lack of business understanding regarding banking regulation. The views from the BankCo were no different with senior leaders and focus groups describing HRD value being hindered by their *"lack of awareness of how you need risk oversight to run a bank"* (CSFG08). A knock-on effect of this lack of regulation knowledge was the impact on developing stakeholder relationships with the risk function and the regulator. These were relationships which HRD felt *"ill-prepared and equipped to handle"* (CSHR02) as there was a need to bring *"specific technical expertise and capability into the business that we [HRD] were unable to provide"* (CSHR05). HRD participants viewing the crisis as exposing them to not having enough understanding of the needs of the business, specifically in relation to risk.

Whilst there was a concern around risk experience within the HRD function, a number of leaders broadened this wider and spoke about *"the fact that the majority of our HR & HRD people haven't any real first-line or functional experience outside of the HR sphere"* (CS04), seeing it as a barrier to delivering value. When discussing the topic of business experience, one of the senior HRD participants attributed their ability to influence the BankCo's approach to a regulation issue due to previous commercial roles where they had responsibilities for credit risk as illustrated in their statement below:

*Having worked in the business, in a commercial role, I understood what would work from a risk & compliance perspective and was able to bring that to the table, rather than relying on others [the risk function] to provide all the answers. (CSHRD02).*

When questioned on business experience, 2 out of the 6 HR/D participants had worked in non-HR roles and two others had worked in other industries than banking. However, they didn't feel that pre-crisis this had an adverse impact on their ability to deliver value. Reasons given were that pre-crisis, the focus had been on operating more as a training provider rather than now having to understand specialist knowledge of banking regulation and apply it to HRD plans and policies. HRD participants did acknowledge that the general perception of the HRD team in the BankCo as a "*bunch of lifers*" (CSHRD06) was a fair reflection given the low turn-over within HRD in the organisation. Furthermore, the benefit of having such firm experience was seen as an enabler of HRD value as will be discussed more fully in section 6.12.1 (*Organisational Designer*).

BankCo participants were able to explain how HRD had developed a better understanding of regulation requirements as the BankCo moved through the crisis sequence. Their views revealed a similar pattern to the phase 1 findings (section 5.10.2) that showed that HRD worked more closely with the risk function whilst also ensuring that they were appropriately upskilled in regulation matters. The successful delivery of mandatory compliance training was also seen as HRD developing better regulatory understanding.

## 6.2.2 Mandatory learning: the double-edged sword

HRD participants saw the regulatory landscape as a double-edged sword in contributing to their value proposition. Whilst there was agreement that the crisis gave HRD a mandate and greater license to operate, there was a concern that it also resulted in a “*dumbing down of the function*” (CSHR03) and “*highlighted gaps in our [HRD] understanding of the business*” (CSHR06).

With a drive to produce evidence to the regulator, there was an increase in the amount of mandatory learning that was required. Those in the focus groups also felt that there was a considerable increase in the amount of “*treading through treacle to tick a box, type of learning*” (CSFG05), that was now part of the everyday requirement within the organisation. However, they, along with senior leaders, didn’t see this type of learning as impacting negatively on the HRD brand as illustrated by the statement below from one of the focus group participants:

*The e-learning and box ticking that we have got to do, is a bit like paying a penance for the sins of those before us. It is what it is, and I think everyone is sensible enough to realise that this sort of stuff just needs done. There is plenty of good activity going on with our leadership that HRD shouldn’t be concerned about their brand being tarnished. Everyone realises it is risk & conduct covering their ass. (CSFG11)*

The statement from CSFG11, a line manager, is illustrative of a pragmatic perspective from participants in the focus groups regarding ongoing compliance learning. The view from this set of stakeholders was that certain mandatory training was required, however they could see the value of other HRD practices such as the group wide leadership programme that were more development orientated and didn’t see HRD within the BankCo restricted only to compliance training.

Whilst the HRD participants acknowledged the need for mandatory training given the new risk-orientated context they operated in, 2 HRD participants described it as impacting on personal motivation and the resource impact from administering such initiatives as seen by the statement below:

*Lots of what was required was pretty dull & boring stuff. Not exactly what many of us had gotten into HRD for. There was big focus on getting people through their prescribed learning modules, lots of reporting, metrics and paper-work. At times, I felt more like a school principal rather than the head of a learning function. (CSHR04)*

Increased workload as a result of regulatory administrative tasks was seen as a frustration from all participants.

### **6.2.3 Coaching as a support in dealing with regulatory demands**

The BankCo findings provided a ‘thick description’ of HRD being proactive in providing coaching support for senior participants. This was regarded by participants as valuable in helping manage the stress of dealing with the regulator so that they were suitably prepared for meetings and the demands of events such as attending regulatory meetings, public inquiries and the on-going requirements of the SMCR. Senior leaders welcomed this support and similar to the views of SL09 in section 4.2.1 suggests that coaching was a valuable HRD activity in dealing with the pressures of the regulatory landscape. It also provides an example of HRD displaying environmental scanning capabilities. As a function it recognised that its knowledge of regulation was not adequate but would develop over time. However, rather than do nothing, it was able to seize the opportunity to demonstrate value through providing coaching support.

#### **6.2.4 Summary: macro environment: regulatory landscape**

The *regulatory landscape* was interpreted by participants as playing a role in the value of HRD. The lack of business understanding was a barrier to HRD value (Aldrich et al., 2015); however, this knowledge was developed over time. Given the increased role of risk and compliance within the business there was an increase in mandatory training. However, despite the concerns of HRD participants, other organisational stakeholders did not view this negatively or impacting the HRD brand. It was seen however by HRD as creating additional administrative tasks; however, these were necessary to demonstrate to the regulator that cultural changes were taking place. Those in senior leadership experienced dealing with the regulator as a stressful process and HRD value was attributed in coaching support for leaders to manage and engage with this new stakeholder group.

#### **6.3 Micro environment [1]: HRD investment**

The findings from the BankCo provided further evidence that post-crisis, HRD value is explained by the ability to secure budget for HRD practices. It demonstrates within a single organisation how different stakeholders agreed that *HRD Investment* was a characteristic of HRD value. Specifically, the on-going investment into a group-wide leadership programme that had run for several years during the *recovery* and *renewal* stages was referenced by all participants. Furthermore, the BankCo findings provided a more in-depth understanding of stakeholder perceptions of the driver for *HRD Investment* that was varied amongst phase 1 participants (sections 4.3.1- 4.3.3) and summarized in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). In addition, the findings showed that BankCo business partnering was not significantly impacted as was expressed by some leaders from phase 1.

### 6.3.1 HRD value attributed to securing budget

Against the repeated cycle of cost-reduction within the BankCo, HRD was seen to have value due to the continued investment in the learning budget. One participant commenting that they had been involved in “86 different re-structuring projects” (CS02) and another noting that “the organisation has shed several skins, with my team now being on their 7<sup>th</sup> Managing Director” (CS08). The statement from CS01 illustrates how investment was seen as a key metric by which stakeholders viewed HRD value:

*Put it like this, when you are asking about a functions’ value, a key metric is what budget do they have to deliver their objectives. When you look at HRD in this business, they have definitely had the luxury of sitting in the slip-stream of the CEO needing to demonstrate change. But I also think they have been clever in upping their game around how they have branded themselves and positioned the value they bring. (CS01)*

The statement above draws out the view from senior leaders that post-crisis HRD developed increased capability in being able to effectively negotiate with stakeholders around business cases for HRD investments. Several participants who would have played a key role in signing off HRD budgets saw HRD “leverage the value they had in the outputs of their programmes” to “build compelling and robust business cases” (CS06). Pre-crisis, the belief was that HRD had become “lazy in creating the compelling reason for investment, operating more out of a sense of entitlement, rather than driving strategic value” (CS05). As a result of the crisis, one of the Divisional CEO’s perceived HRD as being more effective at aligning strategic objectives with learning outcomes and “communicating those outcomes with clarity and purpose to those that held the purse strings” (CS08).

Feedback from the focus groups also attributed the ability to secure budget by referring to the group-wide leadership programme that had been in place for several years. This programme was rolled out from the CEO and his team, was comprised of several modules and was delivered in partnership with an external learning consultancy. Focus groups also described “*on-going investment in the delivery of non-discretionary learning interventions such as team effectiveness and sports coaching*” (CSFG11). The view was that “*they [HRD] must be doing something right, to get budget, when the rest of us are struggling to get what we need to run the business*” (CSFG14). When questioned on what HRD was doing right, the on-going use of metrics, along with the creation of content that was both stimulating and addressed the changes in the regulatory landscape were given as examples.

### **6.3.2 Motivation for HRD investment**

Phase 1 participants had questioned the motivation for *HRD investment* with some viewing it cynically as a means simply to satisfy the regulator (see section 4.3.1) whereas C-Suite leaders saw it as strategically aligned with creating a new direction for their organisation. The views from BankCo participants supported those of phase 1 C suite leaders. When questioned further, BankCo participants viewed investment in HRD practices as strategic to help embed culture changes and specifically support the new organisational purpose and values that was developed during the *recovery* stage through the *Renaissance Man* practices (see section 6.11). Rather than being driven by the regulator, investment for development was seen through the lens of supporting ‘*the forward trajectory of the organisation rather than looking back*’ (CS07). The group-wide leadership programme was personally sponsored by the CEO to align with his strategy to make the bank more customer-centric. He talked openly about using principles of the programme successfully in previous organisations and brought in an

external learning consultancy that he had previously worked with to help co-deliver the programme with the internal HRD team.

### **6.3.3 Business partnering**

Phase 1 leaders managing large front-line teams identified the reduction of HRD business partners as impacting on the workload of their line managers along with an overall decrease in business partnering capability (see section 4.3.1). The BankCo had also seen a reduction in HRD headcount, however participants did not see this as significantly impacting business partnering. CS09 managed one of the largest front-line teams within the BankCo. His view on business partnering was that *“HRD did a good job in equipping our leaders with toolkits for each of the initiatives that we rolled out”* (CS09). Line management from the focus groups supported this view, citing several models and toolkits that they were upskilled in as part of the group-wide leadership programme and then cascaded to their teams (see section 6.12.2, for an example of a decision-making toolkit). The creation of a learning app was also referenced by the focus group line managers as supporting them in their role as illustrated by the views of CSFG07 *“Having an app specifically for line managers was helpful in providing tips on how to manage the team for someone who was time poor as myself”*.

### **6.3.4 Summary: Micro environment [1]: HRD investment**

The allocation of investment during lean times was a yardstick that all participants saw as validation of HRD activity. Senior leaders experienced improved business case submissions for budget approval with the use of evaluation metrics to support this. Broadly, the CEO and senior leadership were supportive of the need to drive culture change and were willing to invest in such practices. This endorsement was the driver for



investment, rather than simply meeting regulatory demands. Specifically, the development of an organisational purpose and values was all about communicating to the organisation that it was time to look forward rather than continue to focus on the '*sins of the past*' (see section 6.11.1-6.11.3). The findings suggest that organisational purpose can play a role in securing *HRD Investment* within a post-crisis context. Funding for the group-wide leadership was again endorsed by the CEO who wanted to develop a more customer-centric set of skills and capabilities. Whilst other phase 1 organisations of similar size had experienced challenges around business partnering, BankCo participants were able to give numerous examples of toolkits and support such as a mobile learning app that provided support for line managers.

#### **6.4 Micro environment [2]: crisis stages**

Participants framed the post-crisis years into three distinct stages (*containment, recovery and renewal*) and used these to attribute value to the HRD function.

Throughout the post-crisis period, there were several significant changes in senior management within the organisation which impacted on the crisis management goals that were set for the organisation. Similar to the findings in chapter 5, there was no defining end point of each stage with a certain amount of overlap between each one. However, the roll-out of a new organisational purpose and values was referenced by all participants as an important indicator of moving from a containment/survival mindset into one that was about recovery. Similarly, the roll-out of coaching and programmes around 'agile' we associated with moving into the renewal stage. In the following section I will provide an overview of the findings relating to the containment stage before exploring the dynamic HRD roles that were displayed by HRD within each stage.

## 6.5 Containment stage: overview

Within the *containment* stage, participants saw the focus of the BankCo orientating around “*survival mode, keeping the lights on, dealing with cost*” (CS06). Senior leaders didn’t regard HRD as playing a strategic role during this stage but they sought to qualify their view about the lack of HRD strategic input by citing the emergency conditions as a reason for a support only role for HRD as illustrated by the views of CS02; “*it would have been unfair to expect them to provide any more than a support role, whilst the whole house was on fire*” (CS02). There were several conflicting viewpoints from business leaders on HRD value in the *containment* stage. Some leaders felt that HRD was able to provoke and challenge the need for change in legacy behaviours through the *Provocateur* role, whilst others who were the most senior of those interviewed (CS01,06,08) saw senior management, not HRD as being the catalyst for change.

Feedback from the focus groups felt that during this *containment stage*, that there was limited learning and development opportunities, with any practices that were driven by the HRD function focusing purely on the technical requirements of the job and the demands of the regulator. Therefore, the belief from this group comprising of line managers and front-line staff was that HRD value was not significant in the *containment* stage. However, HRD and senior leader’s views differ in that they saw these mandatory tasks as important in demonstrating the required change to the regulator. This example shows the challenge for HRD in managing stakeholder expectations with different views expressed about the same HRD activity.

Overall, the picture painted by participants of the *containment* stage was that HRD value was limited, due to the pressures on the business and HRD not understanding its role in a crisis. Participant recollections of this stage highlight the extremity of the challenges with phrases such as “*it was a bit like an orchestra, but with everyone playing their own sheet music*” (CS08) and “*at that time, I would describe it like A&E (Accident & Emergency), dealing with a patient that was bleeding out*” (CS09). Three dynamic HRD roles in the *containment* stage described HRD value, *HRD Voice*, *Healer* and *Provocateur*, which will be discussed in the following sections.

## **6.6 Dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice**

The findings from the BankCo provide further understanding from the phase 1 findings of how *HRD Voice* was initially impacted by HRD’s association with pre-crisis behaviours and their lack of crisis management knowledge as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). Similar to the phase 1 findings, the strength of *HRD Voice* grew in the latter stages of the *containment* stage and continued within the *recovery* and *renewal* stages. This positive change was associated with executive sponsorship of HRD practices, particularly the role of the CEO.

### **6.6.1 Lack of creditability**

Phase 1 HR/D participants felt that their creditability was impacted in the early part of the *containment* stage. They explained that they had become a scapegoat for developing capabilities that pre-crisis were aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation (section 5.2.2). The ‘sins of the past’ perception was also evident in the BankCo with one of the senior HRD participants describing it as “*an erosion of trust from senior leaders with many of them feeling let down by us [HRD]*” (CSHR04). BankCo HRD

participants felt that it took several years for them to “*shake off the legacy of the past and rebuild the trust with the leadership*” (CSHR06). The rebuilding was supported by the endorsement of the CEO, along with the other dynamic HRD roles (*Healer and Provocateur*) that were adopted in the *containment stage*.

When senior leaders and those in the focus groups were questioned further on the role that HRD had played pre-crisis, the view was that HRD had not provided a “*control and check to the toxic culture*” (CS07), rather they were seen as largely tactical and subservient to the organisation, rather than strategic. However, several participants shared that even if HRD had tried to challenge pre-crisis behaviours they “*would have been committing professional suicide, given the autocratic leader we had*” (CSFG04). The findings show the complex context that HRD operates in post-crisis, dealing with issues of blame and scapegoating from stakeholders within the organisation.

Similar to phase 1 findings (section 5.2.2), HRD used external consultancies to deliver some of the early development practices as a means to re-establish credibility and also develop their own understanding of crisis management principles which was described by BankCo participants as positively impacting *HRD Voice*. Similar to providing coaching support (see section 6.2.3) this initiative provides a further example of HRD displaying dynamic capabilities. They were able to see and act on an opportunity to re-establish their credibility by bringing in subject matter experts to meet organisational needs.

## 6.6.2 Lack of crisis management understanding

The BankCo findings further reinforced the view from phase 1 participants that HRD's capacity to operate in a crisis was impacted by their lack of knowledge of crisis management (CM) practices. A focus group line manager (CSFG06) commented that *"they [HRD] didn't really seem to know how to respond once the crap hit the fan, it [the crisis] was outside their wheelhouse"*. This participant was a middle manager for one of the internal communications teams and as such would have been tasked with coordinating messages to employees as the crisis unfolded on topics such as culture, engagement and leadership.

A similar view was shared by the senior leaders who felt that HRD were taken by surprise when the crisis occurred and didn't come forward with a clear plan. As a result, in a time-pressured context, they felt that HRD was pushed to the side-lines as others got on with the task of organisational survival. When probing HR/D participants on their understanding of CM pre-crisis, CSHRD03 a senior people director stated that:

*Disaster recovery wasn't something that we had really focused on. Yes, we had a plan for what happened if there was a major incident like a building shuts down, but nothing of the size and nature of the crisis. We were woefully under-prepared, but then again so was everyone. (CSHRD03)*

The views of CSHRD03 are interesting as he went on to share how in the *renewal* stage, his team were using principles from High Reliability Organisations to develop effective environmental scanning capabilities both within the HRD team and throughout the organisation (section 6.14.2).

Other HR/D practitioners shared similar views that in the containment stage they did not have a framework for how to deal with the CM, organisational change, learning and cultural priorities that were required by the organisation as illustrated by the views of CSHRD01 below:

*I think we have certainly come a long way in understanding the discipline of crisis management, not just the technical side of it, but what is required for the long haul and how to keep the learning and change going. I don't think any of us [speaking about the learning team] were prepared for this, it's just not what you focus on when you think people development. (CSHRD01)*

Her views reflected that of the other HR/D BankCo participants that CM became an area that had pre-crisis been ignored but now was an ongoing focus for HRD.

### **6.6.3 Exec sponsorship**

A characteristic of *HRD Voice* in both sets of findings is how it strengthened from an initial weak position to one where HRD was able to develop executive sponsorship and strengthen relationships with stakeholders so that the HRD agenda aligned with organisational goals. BankCo participants attributed the prominence of HRD practices to the sponsorship that came from the Group and Divisional CEO's. The symbolic nature of the change in reporting lines with the Group HR Director directly reporting into the CEO was seen as important. It was interpreted as "*sending out a clear message that the culture agenda, was a key priority for the CEO*" (CS07). Whilst this allowed the HRD function closer proximity to the senior decision-makers, the belief from business leaders was that "*HRD's job was made significantly easier through the support of the CEO*" (CS09) as illustrated in the example statement below:

*Everyone was very clear, that this was [CEO's name] agenda. It was something that he was communicating both internally to staff and externally to the market and the regulator. Change was required, culture had to improve and he was owning this agenda. As a leader, it was pretty compelling stuff. For those of us under the old regime, we were now seeing someone that we could respect and have confidence in. (CS01)*

The above statement captures participant's perception to the importance of executive sponsorship in overcoming some of the organisational barriers to change. When questioned further on the nature of the relationship between the CEO and HRD, the three Divisional CEO's were best placed to answer this and described HRD as having evolved from a "*silent partner to a strategic partner*" (CS01, CS08) and a "trusted advisor" (CS06). Focus group participants referenced the role that the Group HRD Director played in team coaching the senior team as part of the group-wide leadership programme as evidence that HRD was operating strategically within the organisation. The CEO was known for sharing publicly his own development journey and the impact of customer focused culture programmes in his previous organisations which ensured that he was seen as an advocate for learning and development. This highlights the importance of the CEO's orientation towards development as an enabler of *HRD Voice* post-crisis. It can also explain the difference in views from phase 1 participants (SLO3, SL15) in section 5.2.1 who suggested that the nature of *HRD Voice* was subservient due to a more autocratic CEO style of leader in their organisations.

#### **6.6.4 Summary dynamic HRD role [1] HRD Voice**

The association with the 'sins of the past' created a question mark about HRD credibility (Gubbins et al., 2018) which along with a lack of crisis management

knowledge impacted HRDs capacity to operate strategically in the early crisis stages. The examples from the BankCo extend our knowledge on the role that blame and scapegoating plays post-crisis and the impact this might have on perceptions of HRD (Smith and Elliott, 2007). There was broad agreement that the nature and extent of the *HRD Voice* grew in the latter stage of the *containment* stage and continued to grow in the *recovery* and *renewal* stages. This was evidenced by not only the symbolic nature of the reporting line of HR into the CEO but also their sponsorship and endorsement of HRD practices.

In the next section I will explore the second dynamic HRD role in the *containment* stage: *Healer*.

## **6.7 Dynamic HRD role [2] Healer**

Findings from the BankCo extended the understanding from phase 1, identifying that by adopting a *Healer* role, HRD supported in building trust, re-establishing engagement and provided emotional support as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). Specific examples were shared of how storytelling was seen as beneficial by all organisational members and the organisations response to dealing with issues that resulted in emotional and psychological impact. A further example was provided of how HRD effectively scanned the internal environment and provided appropriate emotional support for those who were dealing with distressed businesses as a result of the GFC



### **6.7.1 Storytelling**

Senior leaders talked about engaging in storytelling during the containment stage as part of a process for understanding and processing the crisis. On one level it was seen as “*cathartic and releasing*” (CS01), when in a peer context such as a team effectiveness session. Storytelling was also used extensively as a means to communicate with the rest of the organisation. Participants in the focus groups found these sessions very helpful in helping to create a “*shared experience and meaning of what we were all going through*” (CSFG14), with a belief that it made leaders more approachable and human at a time when trust of senior leaders within the organisation was at a low level. Line managers from the focus groups also shared how storytelling activities provided a greater connection point with their line managers at a time in the containment stage when most leadership interactions were characterised by urgent and immediate decision-making.

### **6.7.2 Emotional support**

Senior leader participants commented that they engaged with members of the HRD community differently post-crisis, using them as more of “a sounding board and therapist” (CS01) than they would have done pre-crisis:

*You found yourself in this place, where it felt very vulnerable. Personally, I thought my HRD business partner was fantastic. I'd say that I leaned on them quite heavily for a season to help me process everything that was happening.*  
(CS01)

CSHR06, who had responsibility for sourcing external coaching providers shared how one of his early tasks was to make sure that there was access to a panel of suitably qualified therapists and coaches for senior leaders. Those in the focus groups did not

talk about direct experience of HRD providing emotional support with the view that employee support was received from their line manager. Rather than a criticism, participants sought to explain the lack of contact with HRD practitioners by citing the size of the organisation as illustrated in the statement from CSFG01, a business development manager, *“given the scale and size of our organisation, it would be unfair to expect HRD’s reach to get down to us in the front line”* (CSFG01). Line managers within the focus groups shared how they had to take responsibility to listen to and deal with the emotional fall-out with their team, but similar to the comment above, didn’t view this as a negative against HRD.

There was a view that emotional care for employees was important with reference made to the negative impact of on-going public inquiries and popular press about banking in general and the organisation specifically.

### **6.7.3 Dealing with distressed business units**

One of the Divisional CEO’s (CS08) shared a specific example of how HRD had *“kept their ear to the ground”* and been able to drive a strategic initiative for teams that were dealing with distressed businesses as a result of the GFC. These were often difficult interactions that drew on intense emotional and psychological resources from those involved. CSHRD03 was able to share how his team had used data from listening exercises along with engagement with senior leaders who were leading these business units to understand that there was a growing disconnect between the customer and the bank. This example highlights how HRD within the BankCo displayed DC’s in being able to sense, seize and adapt to environmental changes. This resulted in a set of customer-facing practices for senior management to promote greater awareness and

transparency as well as providing ongoing emotional support and coaching to staff who were responsible for these projects. A number of focus group participants who were part of CS08's division and worked with the distressed businesses were also able to provide examples of how these support toolkits were then used by line managers with their teams.

#### **6.7.4 Summary dynamic HRD Role [2] Healer**

There was widespread appreciation for the skills of HRD practitioners in being able to support the emotional and psychological fall out of the crisis (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). The use of storytelling was seen as a mechanism to communicate messages, make meaning of the crisis and support the re-establishment of trust between employees, line managers and management. The example of supporting those dealing with distressed business was seen as evidence of HRD effectively scanning the internal environment and is a good example of HRD displaying dynamic capabilities in being able to respond effectively to environmental changes. Participants acknowledged that the need for HRD to operate as *Healer* reduced towards the end of the *containment stage*, some 2-3 years from when the crisis first occurred.

Along with the requirements to re-establish credibility for *HRD Voice* and deal with the needs of a hurting organisation, HRD were tasked with holding the mirror up to senior leadership by adopting a *Provocateur* role. This will be discussed in the next section.

## **6.8 Dynamic HRD role [3] Provocateur**

The findings from the BankCo provided an in-depth understanding of how the *Provocateur* role was able to promote critical reflection whilst navigating the organisation's perceived barriers to learning as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). A further benefit of the BankCo findings is that it provided knowledge and understanding on the differences relating to HRD's ability to challenge which was highlighted in the phase 1 findings (section 5.4.2)

### **6.8.1 Impact of critical reflection**

Similar to the phase 1 findings, participants described the value of HRD acting as a *Provocateur* as its ability to stimulate senior leaders to think differently about their *“role, behaviours and ultimately the overall purpose of banking”* (CS09). There was consensus across the participant groups that the organisation had undergone a *“significant and long journey towards re-establishing the banks' identity and the values that would help re-establish customer and employee trust”* (CSHR04). The role that HRD played in this journey was attributed to the functions' ability to design learning experiences that *“provided powerful wake-up movements”* (CS07).

Senior leaders acknowledged that engagement with learning interventions in the early years after the GFC had caused them to *“think differently and deeply at a personal level”* (CS08) about their role as a leader. Several participants described attending leadership events facilitated by an external consultancy that were *“uncomfortable and challenging”* (CS04) as illustrated in the following statement:

*I remember sitting in my hotel room one night after a particularly long and intense sharing session amongst a group of us who were all reasonably senior in the organisation. It was a pretty powerful moment in my career as I had to come to terms with the part that I had played in letting some of this [the crisis] happen on my watch. I think the programme was deliberately designed to give us plenty of thinking time & reflection, as up until this point, we had all been drinking from the firehose, and probably hadn't had the time to sit down and really process what had gone on. (CS01)*

Participants in the focus groups spoke about seeing the impact of these sessions with their line managers, commenting that what took place was often relayed back as part of the storytelling exercises. When asked for other examples of the impact of these sessions, the focus groups were able to share how they felt their leaders displayed greater humility, listening more effectively and were less autocratic in their leadership style.

Whilst this process was regarded by the majority as being a positive experience, with management acknowledging responsibility, one participant CSFG12 did comment that they felt their line manager didn't "*show any real signs of remorse or regret at what had taken place*" and went on to say that they felt the organisation could "*have gone harder on those that caused this, rather than just making them attend a group therapy session*" (CSFG12).

Overall, the findings from the BankCo demonstrate that critical reflection had a positive impact on changing leadership behaviours.

## 6.8.2 Dealing with wink management

The term '*wink management*' was often referred to by BankCo participants referencing when leaders "*engaged in new jargon but old behaviours*" (CSHR01). HRD value was attributed to the way HRD understood and addressed the cultural barriers to post-crisis learning through innovative design, delivery and embedding practices. One of the senior HR/D participants referred to this as preparing "*the patient [the organisation] for the attack of the anti-bodies [cynical leaders]*" (CSHR05). She went on to describe the thinking that went into the design of learning initiatives stating that:

*One of the things that we were acutely aware of when designing our programmes was how we were going to address the legacy behaviours that were still in existence in certain parts of the organisation. In my team we coined the term 'dealing with the antibody', when thinking through our post-programme embedding processes. (CSHR05)*

Her language is similar to that of HRD21 (section 5.8.2) who referred to having to deal with the 'pathogens' in the organisation when dealing with individuals who were resistant to change. Line managers from the focus groups along with senior leaders felt that the deliberate focus on the line manager acting as a role model for the new culture along with senior management buy-in ensured that "*there was no room to hide, if you weren't on the bus, this would become evident very quickly with what you were being asked to deliver*" (CS03).

## 6.8.3 HRD challenge

The findings from phase 1 identified a difference of views on HRD challenge, with a small number of HRD participants from different organisations describing how they were unable to challenge negative leadership behaviours post-crisis based on a lack of

support from HR executives and senior leadership (Section 5.4.2, example of HRD17). However, within the BankCo, there was agreement that HRD challenge was encouraged by the prominent sponsorship of the CEO of the culture agenda, the proximity of the HR Director and the HRD team to the CEO and the active removal of ‘bad actors’ who were not prepared to change. The findings reinforce the importance of CEO sponsorship for HRD to be able to challenge pre-crisis behaviours effectively.

#### **6.8.4 Summary dynamic HRD Role [3] Provocateur**

The BankCo findings provide further understanding of how faced with faced with legacy behaviours, HRD was able to provoke critical reflection and change at a personal level with senior leadership. Employees saw the positive benefit of this role through changed behaviours with their line managers such as less autocratic leadership styles and displaying more effective listening skills. By understanding the cultural barriers to learning HRD were able to by-pass the organisational issue of ‘wink management’. The findings also show that HRD challenge was more effective post-crisis due to the engagement and buy-in from the CEO and senior stakeholders.

Having presented BankCo findings on the *containment* stage, in the next section I will discuss how the organisation progressed through the *recovery* stage.

### **6.9 Recovery Stage: overview**

As the BankCo moved into the *recovery* stage, participants saw this as a shift in focus directed by the senior leadership aimed at “*moving away from looking at issues of the past and focusing on the future*” (CS05). HRD’s value was seen as building the capability required within the organisation to succeed going forward. Participants

perceived business stability as an enabler for HRD to play more of a strategic role as illustrated by the example statement below:

*Now that we had stability in leadership, and were moving towards a sustainable operating model, what was required of HRD was to develop a framework that allowed us to build the capability within the organisation. (CS03)*

HRD's value in supporting CM organisational goals was seen primarily through the design, delivery and evaluation of a group-wide leadership programme that "*at its heart was about instilling consistency of management and practice across a very fragmented organisation*" (CSHR02), the development and implementation of a new organisational purpose and values and ensuring that crisis lessons were embedded. HRD value during the *recovery* stage was attributed to bringing "*consistency and creating a set of common language and ways of working*" (CS07) to the organisation. Whilst there was stability in leadership and consistency in approaches, participants stressed the continued dynamic conditions that existed within the organisation with cost cutting and a "*constant change management context*" (CSHR05) being every-day features that HRD had to deal with. Alongside this was the shifting external market conditions with changes in consumer behaviour with a move to online banking and the challenge from fintech businesses.

The views of those in the focus groups supported the perception that HRD added value during the *recovery* stage through the design, delivery and embedding of the group-wide programme as illustrated by the example statement below:



*Up until this point, we felt largely neglected from a pure L&D perspective. Everything was very technical and mandatory, and not really very engaging. With the arrival of the [programme name], suddenly we were getting new tools and processes to play with. It was like a shot in the arm and felt like we were being included. (CSFG17)*

Those within the HRD function attributed the value of their role not only through the internal metrics that demonstrated the impact of their initiatives but also the fact that several other organisations had looked at their approach and adopted similar models. There was a feeling that they were seen as leading the market when it came to culture change, evidenced by the fact that the organisation won several training awards for their group-wide leadership programme.

In addition to the strengthening of *HRD Voice*, HRD value was explained by three dynamic HRD roles of *Change Agent, Renaissance Man and Organisational Designer*. The next section will present BankCo specific findings relating to *the Change Agent* role.

### **6.10 Dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent**

The BankCo findings provided further understanding of the phase 1 findings that identified the tensions that HRD needed to manage in delivering a group wide change agenda as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). Specifically, how to preserve organisational memory on what went wrong pre-crisis whilst also allowing the organisation to heal and move forward.

### 6.10.1 Organisational memory

Returning to the pre-crisis ways was a concern especially amongst the focus groups.

Whilst they acknowledged that change had taken place, there was a question as to how it could be sustained. The use of a leader-led model for change “*ensured management buy-in with no room for dodging responsibility*” (CSFG13), whilst coaching and on-going measurement through companywide metrics in employee surveys and performance management ensured that learning was embedded.

The findings showed that HRD were proactive in preserving crisis specific organisational memory throughout the *recovery* stage and indeed into the *renewal* stage. Those in the focus groups shared how they engaged in exercises such as “*stop, start, continue*” (CSFG09) and “*numerous retro’s [retrospectives]*” (CSFG15) to make sure that everyone was clear on what had been wrong with the pre-crisis culture.

Similar to the views of one of the COO’s (SL08) from phase 1 (section 5.6.1) several of the more senior leaders felt that there was an unnecessary emphasis of preserving organisational memory. They thought that there was an over-emphasis on what had gone wrong pre-crisis, which they viewed as a barrier to engagement and “*counter-productive to part of the overall healing journey we were on*” (CS01). When questioned further, these senior leaders described how the new organisational purpose and values (which will be discussed in section 6.11 *Renaissance Man*) served as a reference point for adopting a more forward focused perspective for the organisation. However, HRD participants and those in the focus groups felt that it was important to continue to refer to the pre-crisis culture as a driver for change. They felt that combined with the organisational purpose work that there was a suitable balance between the two.

### **6.10.2 Summary dynamic HRD role [4] Change Agent**

HRD felt they were given a clear mandate from the CEO to develop and embed a programme that would bring about cultural change. Concerns around the sustainability of such a change agenda were addressed by the ongoing commitment to invest in initiatives that lasted several years to ensure that lessons learnt were preserved. HRD adopted CM principles of unlearning and preserving organisational memory. However, there was a tension between retaining memory whilst also allowing the organisation to move forward.

### **6.11 Dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man**

The findings from the BankCo provided further understanding of the phase 1 findings that showed the positive impact organisational purpose had on driving engagement and HRD's role in its development, operationalisation and embedding with other HRD practices as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0).

#### **6.11.1 Organisational purpose as a means for rebuilding engagement**

As part of the *recovery* stage, participants acknowledged the value in HRD initiatives that developed a new organisational purpose, vision and values. This was seen as important to “*signal the intent that we were moving forward to both the market and our staff*” (CS04). HRD practitioners shared how they had worked closely with external consultancies and senior leadership to define what the new values and associated behaviours entailed. In agreeing the programme design, the Divisional CEO's (CS01, CS06, CS08) shared how it was decided amongst the executive team and HRD that the executive would go through the programme first to ensure that it was seen as endorsed

by the whole organisation. Modules were then rolled out to the senior leadership before being cascaded through a leader-teacher approach to the rest of the organisation.

Learning programmes with external consultancies were designed for senior leadership to allow them time to align the new set of organisational values with their own personal values as noted by CS09 who described how because of the programme, it allowed him to get “*fresh clarity on my own purpose, sense of values and approach to leadership, that I was able to take back to the team*” (CS09). When questioned further on changes to his leadership, he described how he engaged with an external coach to develop a more non-directive leadership style as this aligned with his own values and developed a more open environment in his team by encouraging the sharing of their own values with each other.

By acting as a *Renaissance Man*, those in the focus groups thought that HRD played an important role in “*providing hope for change*” (CSFG05) as there was a strong emphasis on rebuilding pride on the role of banking in society rather than simply being seen as a mechanism to generate shareholder value. The launch and embedding of the purpose initiatives was described by one focus group participant as “*finally, there was something that I felt was worth being part of, rather than being ashamed of calling myself a banker*” (CSFG12).

HRD participants shared how engagement and leadership scores improved as a result of the roll-out of the organisational purpose and how the organisation had used this data to obtain several national training awards.

### **6.11.2 Integration into HRD/HRM practices**

Participants shared that once the organisational purpose had been rolled out across the organisation, it continued to be integrated into the group wide leadership programme that was focused on helping the organisation to become more customer focused and values driven. Senior leaders and focus group participants felt this integration strengthened the value of the learning activity, ensuring buy-in and commitment from participants as illustrated by the statement below:

*One of the things HRD upped their game with, was ensuring that all modules of the [Group leadership] programme were clearly mapped to the leadership framework. Previously you could have been on a programme and scratching your head a bit as to why the content was relevant to your role. Now, its really clear, what is expected of me in terms of behaviours and values, how I will be measured and rewarded on this and why the development activity will support in this. (CS07)*

Given the contentious issue around BankCo bonuses which featured in a number of public press articles, it was important that there was a close alignment between the development of desired organisational competencies and how individuals would be performance management and rewarded. The statement from CSHRD04, a Head of Leadership Development illustrates how HRD were scanning both the internal and external environments to make sure that the organisational purpose was integrated with other HRM practices such as recruitment and reward:

*We had finally got ourselves to a place where the business was stabilised and the request from [CEO name] was to help chart what good looked like going forward. There was a lot of energy around PVV [Purpose, Vision, Values].*

*From recruitment to reward, there was a big drive to make sure everyone knew what was expected of them. (CSHR04)*

She was able to share examples of how her team had worked with colleagues in talent, recruitment and communications to ensure that external messaging was aligned given the requirement to recruit for external senior leadership roles.

### **6.11.3 Summary dynamic HRD role [5] Renaissance Man**

The BankCo findings showed the importance of HRD redefining new organisational purpose, vision and values in re-establishing engagement within a single organisation (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Senior leaders were positive of the opportunity to explore their own values and see if they aligned with that of the organisation. The integration of the purpose work into other HRD/HRM practices was seen as more comprehensive compared to pre-crisis practices.

## **6.12 Dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer**

The findings from the BankCo provided a more in-depth understanding of how HRD firm knowledge was helpful given the extensive changes within senior leadership teams as a result of the crisis as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). Centralisation of the HRD function within the BankCo further extended understanding of how this can support the *Organisational Designer* role.

### **6.12.1 Firm knowledge**

By the recovery stage, all the senior leadership teams within the divisions had gone through significant turnover with new management joining from external organisations.

As a result, the firm knowledge of HRD was seen by all participants as an enabler in dealing with potential barriers to learning and change. As one focus group line manager described it “*they [HRD] knew which cupboards the skeletons were hidden, who the difficult actors would be, and what was broken*” (CSFG06). This statement illustrates the belief from participants that HRD understood the weaknesses of the BankCo pre-crisis structures and processes and were able to implement new ways of working that addressed issues that had been raised by the regulator. Specific concerns had been raised by the regulator about the BankCo’s autocratic leadership style which impacted decision-making pre-crisis. In response by the *recovery* stage, HRD had developed processes such as daily stand-ups, skip level meetings & decision-making toolkits that attempted to address these issues and were incorporated into the group-wide leadership programme. Similar to the example shared in section 5.8.2 where HRD21 worked with his HRD team and external consultancies to identify potential derailers, BankCo HRD participants adopted a similar approach when considering HRD initiatives. This mainly consisted of HRD practitioners working closely with specific leaders who were known to be less open to change to get them onboard before then working with their teams. CSHRD06 who had responsibility for coaching within the organisation shared how he was often approached by colleagues to source external coaches to work with these leaders to help them through the required changes and to become more effective role-models. The benefit of firm knowledge further highlights the paradox within a single organisation for HRD. In section 6.6.1 (HRD Voice), the HRD brand is perceived to be lack creditability due to association with the pre-crisis culture, whereas referring to a different stage of the crisis and role of HRD, having the same HRD practitioners in role is seen as a positive.

### 6.12.2 Centralisation of HRD and partnership with HRM

The *recovery* stage resulted in a significant centralisation programme within the BankCo which had an impact on HRD. Previously, divisions had autonomy for learning with their own HRD teams. However, the model moved to a central HRD function with the establishment of centres of excellence. Rather than impacting HRD value, the perception was that centralisation was an enabler as illustrated by CS09:

*It would appear that HRD is in a healthier place now than ever before. They have upped their game and been able to drive their agenda forward with more intent, belief and conviction. I think, the crisis has been beneficial to them as a function (CS09)*

They went on to suggest that there was better quality on communication and processes from HRD compared to pre-crisis, with a belief that the learning proposition was more holistic and less fragmented.

The ability of HRD to communicate HR metrics (360's, leaderships surveys, engagement scores) at various levels within the organisation and externally to the regulator was seen as beneficial with those in the focus groups commenting that the publication of metrics encouraged transparency and visibility that had been previously missing. Those in senior leadership knew that they were being held to account on such metrics as illustrated by CS01:

*Put it like this, when you have a set of metrics in your employee survey, that speak to the new leadership behaviours, and you have your CEO directly contacting you, wanting to know why your scores are down. Then you know this stuff is being taken seriously from the top. That kind of behaviour sends a clear message to his leadership team that he means business and it gave HRD a very clear mandate to work from. (CS01)*



HRD practitioners noted how because of the crisis they had worked more closely with the internal communications team and the wider HR function as there was a significant increase in the number of events and briefings that required input from the HRD metrics.

### **6.12.3 Summary dynamic HRD role [6] Organisational Designer**

The BankCo findings illustrates the paradox of firm knowledge(Gubbins and Garavan, 2009) and applies it to a post-crisis context. Being able to apply prior knowledge and then scan the internal and external environments and integrate this information, so that HRD practices were successfully delivered was seen as an indicator of HRD value. Centralisation of HRD within the BankCo was also seen as an enabler for HRD value improving the delivery of programmes through group wide initiatives rather than divisional siloed practices and the establishment of centres of excellence.

Having discussed the three dynamic HRD roles that supported HRD to deliver value in the *recovery* stage, in the final section I will discuss the *renewal* stage beginning with an overview of what this stage involved within the BankCo.

### **6.13 Renewal Stage**

As the BankCo moved into the *renewal* stage, participants saw commitment to on-going embedding of the leadership programme as evidence of HRD demonstrating value. For a programme that was now several years old, HRD were seen to keep content “*relevant and engaging*” (CS06) through developing on-line learning portals and experimenting with the delivery mechanism that allowed for more bite-size sessions to take place. Line managers from the focus groups attributed HRD value to the fact that leadership

remained engaged in implementing learning from the programme as illustrated in the statement below:

*Their [HRD] value, could be seen by ensuring our leadership have continued to use the language and tools of the programme. I've been around this organisation long enough to see several programmes come & go. The fact that this is still going strong, is a testament to those guys [HRD], not letting anyone off the hook. (CSFG07)*

The CM goals of continuing to embed crisis learning, whilst developing more effective signal detection skills through environmental scanning was attributed to the dynamic HRD roles of *Problem Finder and Dynamic Capability Developer* which will be discussed in the next section.

## **6.14 Dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder**

The findings from the BankCo provided a more in-depth example from the phase 1 findings of how HRD matured in developing dynamic capabilities as summarised by Table 6.1 (section 6.0). Environmental scanning from HRD resulted in an initiative (*Outside In*) aimed at generating innovation that challenged a bounded mind-set. As a *Problem Finder*, BankCo HRD practitioners were able to share how they had adopted practices from crisis management to develop effective scanning capabilities within the HRD function.

### **6.14.1 Dynamic capabilities leading to ‘outside in’**

Given the scale of BankCo, innovation was seen as a potential weakness as the organisation adapted to changes in consumer behaviour. Participants described how HRD developed an initiative called *Outside In* that aimed to bring external perspectives

into the bank through thought-leadership sharing sessions, case studies and site visits. Engaging with a range of industries such as technology, sports and retail, ensured that the organisation was able to look outside of itself and adopt best practice models and approaches from other organisations. The statement from CSHRD01 illustrates the intention behind the initiative:

*Another initiative I remember from that time was this idea of bringing the outside in. So, the language was deliberately focused on trying to get people away from looking inwardly that had kind of developed after the crisis and trying to get people to look outside of the bank and look at customers and look at society and the community that we worked in and I think that really helped. (HRD10)*

As an initiative, *Outside In* was regarded as helpful in moving away from the bounded mind-set that had been prevalent pre-crisis. It ran successfully for a number of years with participants sharing how the language of '*Outside In*' became commonplace within the organisation. It provides a good example of HRD maturing in their own development of dynamic capabilities and provide strategic to the BankCo (Garavan et al., 2016)

#### **6.14.2 HRD adopting crisis management practices to build effective scanning capabilities within the HRD function**

BankCo HRD practitioners believed that they needed to continue to develop effective environmental scanning capabilities even though the crisis was now several years past. They were cautious that as a function, the crisis had exposed a lack of environmental scanning pre-crisis. When questioned on what had been useful in building these scanning capabilities, participants shared that CM behaviours such as '*signal detection*' and '*sensemaking*' had found their way into HRD's practise. The use of external

consultancies with expertise in CM had been a feature in the *containment* and *recovery* stages and HRD had taken onboard learning and practical exercises from these experts. For example, HRD participants talked about a processes of '*looking out & looking in*' that they used within the HRD team. This allowed the team to step back from organisational problems and review from different perspectives, before then stepping back into the problem with new solutions.

CSHRD03, a People Director when describing sensemaking tools that the HRD team used referred to the influence of drawing on lessons from High Reliability

Organisations that helped develop scanning skills:

*We looked at organisations where there was zero tolerance for failure such as Oil & Gas and worked out what their management practices were and what we could apply over to ourselves. Ok, it's not that anyone is going to lose their life in a bank. But we saw how catastrophic it is when the banking system fails, and people can't get money from an ATM. (CSHRD03)*

As noted in section 6.6.2, CSHRD03 had previously shared that a barrier to *HRD Voice* in the *containment* stage was due in part to HRD not understanding CM. This impacted HRDs capacity to function strategically when the crisis occurred. Whereas when discussing HRD several years on from the crisis, this same individual was able to provide examples of HRD having a more thorough understanding of CM. This is consistent with the views of phase 1 HRD participants shared in section 5.10.2 which highlighted that HRD adopted CM principles when developing their approach to the cultural change agenda. The BankCo findings provide further evidence that the GFC was a catalyst for HRD to develop a better understanding of CM.

### **6.14.3 Summary dynamic HRD role [7] Problem Finder**

The detailed example of the *'Outside In'* initiative extends our understanding of HRD practitioners' ability to scan more effectively resulting in early identification of issues and opportunities and allowing for more effective problem resolution. The use of CM practices such as sensemaking within the HRD function was seen as a positive enabler for scanning capabilities to be developed.

### **6.15 Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer**

The BankCo findings provided detailed examples from those of phase 1 that explained how HRD developed dynamic capabilities across the organisation as summarised in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). A group-wide coaching programme along with decision-making toolkits and the more recent roll-out of 'agile thinking' extended understanding of how HRD continued to embed crisis learning whilst also developing capabilities for future business requirements.

#### **6.15.1 Coaching**

Participants identified the use of coaching across the organisation to overcome barriers to learning as a key initiative owned and driven by the HRD function. The organisation had invested heavily in ensuring that coaching frameworks, accreditation and up-skilling of internal coaches were part of the learning proposition. Focus group's front line staff reaction to coaching was very favourable, describing it as *"providing real-time feedback, rather than having to wait for a formal appraisal process"* (CSFG03) and *"allowing learning to happen based on observation by management rather than hearsay"* (CSFG09). Line managers were positive of the impact of coaching on their own development and the impact it made on their teams performance in *"moving the dial from decision being routed through me, to a culture where my reports were empowered*

*to take ownership for their actions”* (CSFG13) Again, the perception from all participants was that HRD was bringing positive challenge to management, requiring them to develop more effective coaching skills than were in evidence pre-crisis, metrics. It also demonstrates a shift in how coaching was used in the post-crisis context from that of a support tool for senior leaders (section 6.2.3) to helping develop a more open and challenging culture.

### **6.15.2 Decision making toolkits**

Participants saw the value in toolkits that HRD developed to aid decision-making. The most widely referenced tool and its application is summarised by the statement from CSHRD04, a Head of Leadership Development:

*We adopted this simple tool that was quickly adopted across other banks. When it came to a decision being made that had impact on credit, the customer, risk, we had a set of 4 or five questions that the stakeholders had to work through. Only if you could answer yes to all of them was the decision deemed a good one and progressed. One of the questions talked about, how would the decision be viewed in future years, it was designed to get people out of the now and then into much more ethical, long-term thinking. (CSHRD04)*

Focus groups described the tool as helpful in allowing critical reflection to take place which had been a criticism of the regulator regarding pre-crisis behaviours.

### **6.15.3 Building for the future**

The renewal stage continues to be on-going in the eyes of HRD practitioners with the view that *“the learning agenda is re-calibrating away from just a risk focus and back to how to drive strategic value”* (CSHRD 2) as demonstrated by the statement below:

*The question we have been exploring over this past season is how do we raise the profile of learning itself as a core capability, as a strategic enabler. So again, it's less about content, it's more about mindset and how to ensure that or how to really encourage and inspire people to really think about how they learn, the way that they learn, what's important, learning everyday as a way to support organisational growth through to individual growth. And also, how do we make it easy for colleagues to access learning so that it's technology abled. (CSHRD 04)*

The recent roll-out of an 'agile thinking' programme was described by participants as further evidence of HRD building capabilities for the future. The organisation had invested heavily in several technology initiatives to ensure competitive advantage against challenger fintech banks. Similar to the views of phase 1 participants in sections 5.11.2 and 5.11.3, the 'agile' programme has been widely adopted across banking serving a dual purpose of demonstrating commitment to on-going learning both to the regulator and internally, whilst also future proofing the organisation as banking moves to a more technology driven experience.

#### **6.15.4 Summary Dynamic HRD role [8] Dynamic Capability Developer**

The findings help explain specific HRD practices that developed behaviours such as sensemaking and reflexive critique which are critical if organisations are to display dynamic capabilities (Garavan et al., 2016). Within the BankCo, coaching, decision-making toolkits along with the more recent 'agile' programme were given as examples. The *Dynamic Capability Developer* role requires HRD to continue to find ways to embed crisis learning and develop individual and organisational capabilities that would support competitive advantage.

## 6.16 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the significant findings from participants in the BankCo relating to the substantive theory of HRD value post-crisis. The findings show how within a single organisation HRD value remains a subjective topic across different stakeholder groups with a variety of expectations of what is required by HRD dependant on specific crisis stages.

The findings from the BankCo show that HRD was perceived to be stronger than that from the phase 1 findings. Overall participants felt that the *regulatory landscape* provided a mandate for HRD to operate and that as the crisis moved through different stages, HRD became more mature in developing capabilities for how to leverage this external environment (Garavan et al., 2016). *HRD Voice* (Garavan, 2007; Holbeche, 2009; Mitsakis, 2017) was also used as a lens to ascribe value with the endorsement of the CEO regarded as a badge of creditability for HRD. The on-going investment into HRD practices as seen as HRD being creditable in demonstrating ROI which was not a feature pre-crisis. Ultimately, HRD being able to perform multiple dynamic HRD roles that aligned with organisational goals at each stage in the crisis was seen as demonstrating HRD value.

The findings show the frustration from stakeholders that in the *containment* stage HRD did not have knowledge of crisis management which impacted their ability to influence strategically (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009). HRD creditability was impacted by scapegoating from other stakeholders that the function had not provided an appropriate level of challenge to the pre-crisis culture (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2014). However, acting as a *Healer* in providing emotional and psychological support was seen



as valuable (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). In the latter part of the *containment* stage, initiatives that provoked leaders to reflect and accept the part they had played in creating the crisis were also seen as helpful (Hutchins and Wang, 2008).

There was agreement that once the organisation moved into the *recovery* stage that HRD ‘upped their game’ and came in with a strong change and cultural programme (Wang, 2008; Mitsakis, 2017). As the organisation centralised the HRD function, it allowed for HRD to be more effective in operating as an *Organisational Designer*, co-ordinating communications and processes around HRD initiatives (Hutchins and Wang, 2008). A further paradox was highlighted in that firm experience (Gubbins and Garavan, 2009) was now regarded as a positive, whereas in the containment stage questions were asked about the creditability and capability of HRD practitioners (Aldrich et al., 2015). Value was seen in the roll out of the organisational purpose and values programme (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) and the group wide leadership programme that had gone through several iterations designed to keep content and delivery innovative and engaging. For line management and frontline staff, this signalled a shift in learning focus, away from away from `programme continued into the *renewal* stage with new capabilities being developed including ‘agile thinking’.

A helpful summary of the mixed perceptions of HRD value post-crisis’ is illustrated in a table on the following page (table 6.3).

**Table 6.3 Mixed perceptions of HRD roles post-crisis (BankCo)**

<b>Regulatory Landscape (HRD value add practices)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior leaders</b>
Demonstrating cultural change to the regulator	+	+/-
Providing coaching support	+	+
Delivering mandatory compliance training	+/-	+
<b>HRD Investment (HRD value add practices)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior leaders</b>
Strategic approach to evaluation	+	+
Business partnering	-	+/-
Innovative design, delivery and embedding approaches	+	+
<b>Containment Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	-	-
Healer	+	+
Provocateur	+/-	+
<b>Recovery Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	+	+
Change Agent	+	+/-
Organisational Designer	+	+/-
<b>Renewal Stage (HRD Role)</b>	<b>HR/D Professionals</b>	<b>Senior Leaders</b>
HRD Voice	+	+
Problem Finder	+	+
Dynamic Capability Developer	+	+

(+) positive perception on HRD value, (+/-) neutral perception on HRD value, (-) negative perception on HRD value

It shows that following the strength of the evidence provided, this was classified as (+) positive perception of adding HRD value, (+/-) neutral perceptions of adding HRD value and (-) negative perceptions of HRD value.

Having presented the phase 2 BankCo findings, I will demonstrate in the next chapter how I developed the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* through an iterative process of engagement with the core categories and the existing literature.

## **7 Chapter 7: The ‘dynamic HRD post-crisis’ theory**

In the previous three chapters I have presented the prominent themes from the findings.

In this chapter I will outline the prevailing theory that was developed from the data as part of the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) methodology which was outlined in chapter 3. This theory will then be used to explore and discuss the findings in more detail in the following chapter. The theory is presented here, following the findings chapter, to authentically portray the process of the research.

Theory can be defined as a statement “of relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding” (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2012, p. 41). This contrasts with a model which is the representation of the explanation or theory. Ultimately, proposing theory is the practice resulting from research (Charmaz, 2006) in which theories attempt to answer questions, account for situations and how they develop, and may account for ‘why’ the situation occurred. Theorizing results from pausing, contemplating, and thinking anew (Charmaz, 2014, p. 244), and in this research, began early in the data collection and analysis as I looked at prospective participants, established connections and asked questions, and ultimately moved beyond description of data to in-depth analysis of processes and the explication of actions. A CGT moves beyond the individual’s experience but reflects the individual perspectives. The theory may be used as “a lens to interpret people’s experience or to direct actions and interventions” (Wuest, 2012, p. 247). The aim of this study was to explain the value of HRD in a post-crisis context by different stakeholders across a range of UK and Irish Banks. The process of data analysis was inductive (data-driven) and deductive (interpretation and abstraction), and included coding, memo’ing, theoretical sampling, etc. as described in section 3.9. Theory was generated in response to the data, coding,

and reflexivity throughout the process of analysis as I came to ‘know’ the data (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006b, p. 4); the product or outcome of analysis is the theory (Charmaz, 2014, p. 245).

Describing how the theory of HRD value post-crisis was constructed is important in order to clearly ground my representation of the theory of HRD value to the data and findings from the research. The intention is not to reduce the theory or break it down to become ‘parts’ of the theory rather than the whole. Rather it is to give context to key considerations that helped inform the theory development process. The description of the process of theory development, as well as a visual representation is presented next.

## **7.1 Development and presentation of the constructed theory**

There were thirteen core categories that developed from the data collection and analysis of the 65 interviews along with the two focus groups from the BankCo. The concurrent data generation and data analysis were described in sections 3.8 and 3.9. The categories that were developed from the data indicated that there was one macro environment, *Regulatory Landscape* and two micro environments (*HRD Investment and Crisis Stages*) along with eight specific dynamic HRD roles that explained HRD value. The ability for HRD to display a ‘dynamic role’ capability throughout the crisis process allowed the function to adapt according to organisational and environmental requirements. The theory presented on the following page in Figure 7.1 shows a representational model of the ‘*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*’.

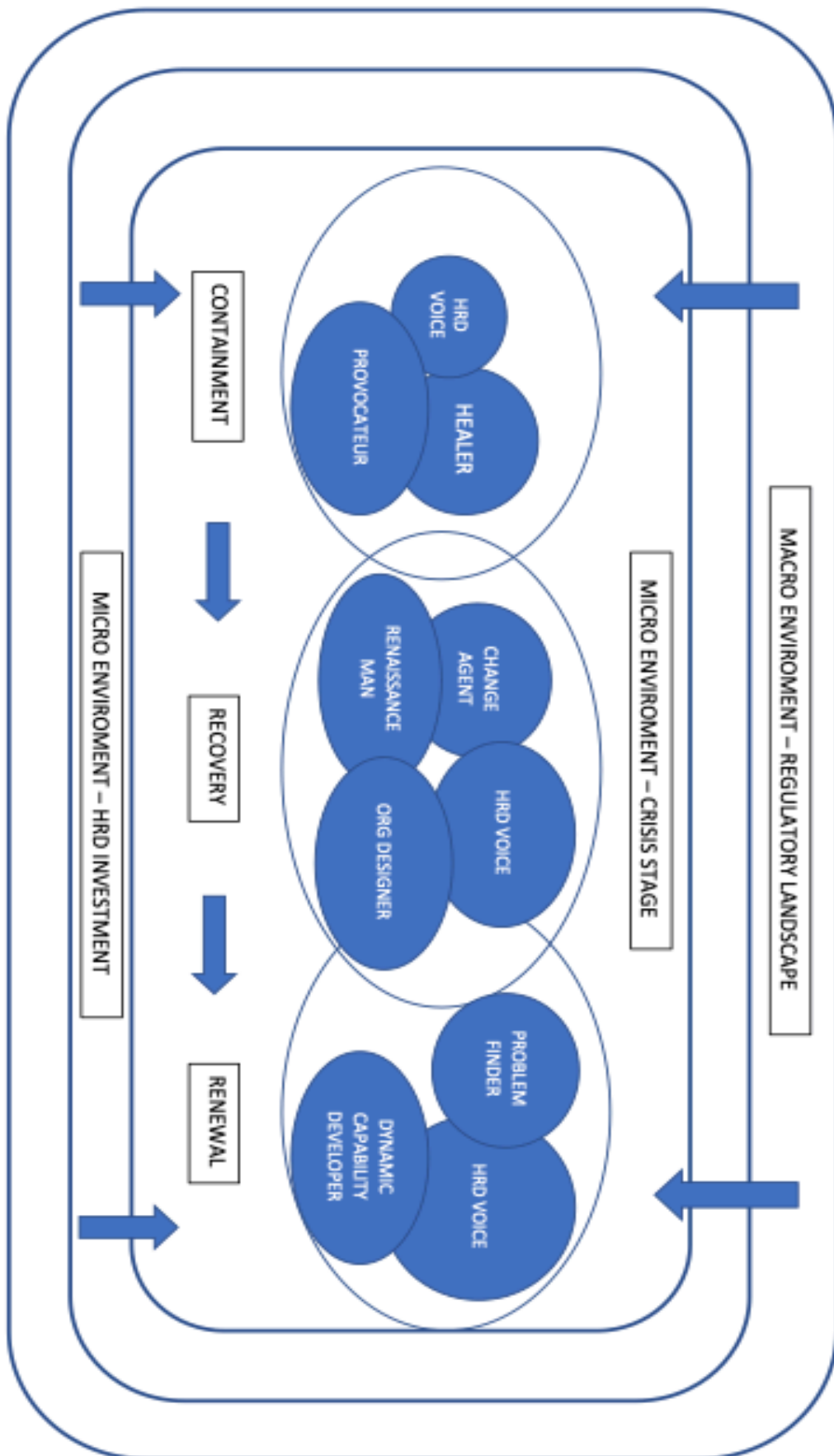


Figure 7-1 Dynamic HRD post-crisis theory

In the next section I will provide an explanation of the dynamic HRD post-crisis theory along with the representational model that was developed. It will begin with an explanation of the macro environment of *regulatory landscape*.

## **7.2 Macro environment: regulatory landscape**

The modified SHRD framework from Mitsakis (2017) was helpful in identifying HRD value in non-steady state environments. The effects of the GFC resulted in a macro environment that was characterised by significant regulatory and public scrutiny as illustrated by the views of SL19, a Head of Product, “*within this company the power lives in the risk compliance function, it’s the tail that wags the dog.*”. As a result, HRD practices that were described as valuable to the organisation are those that demonstrate evidence to the regulator that cultural change is taking place. How HRD practices impacted at an individual level are described in the theory through the dynamic HRD roles (section 7.5). Public scrutiny in the form of public inquests (Elliott and Macpherson, 2010; Gephart, 2007) and intense media exposure (Whittle and Mueller, 2012) also creates a context in which employees can feel scapegoated and morale suffers. HRD value can be achieved by leveraging the opportunities such dynamic environments create. Figure 7.1 above shows that the arrows from the macro-environment outer layer illustrate that HRD value is impacted both positively and negatively by on-going changes external to the organisation.

## **7.3 Micro environment: HRD investment**

Whilst understanding and leveraging the opportunities created by the macro environment, HRD was required to operate within two micro environments: *HRD Investment and Crisis Stages*. Crises create a context in which cost-cutting can result in reduced HRD investment (Horvath, 2010). HRD value can be interpreted by on-going investment against a backdrop of

reduced budgets. The theory explains that *HRD Investment* is not a one-off activity but something the HRD function needs to demonstrate meaningful ROI through a strategic approach to evaluation. By doing so, it can secure on-going support for long-term practices that support cultural change and the embedding of new behavioural and operational processes that are required to meet both the expectation of the regulator and also maximise on the opportunity created by the changes in the macro environment such as changes in market conditions. *HRD Investment* also requires the HRD function to develop new approaches to design, delivery and embedding given budgetary constraints. Again, the arrows from the micro-environment of *HRD Investment* in Figure 7.1 illustrate both the positive and negative impact on the dynamic roles HRD needs to undertake.

#### **7.4 Micro environment: crisis stages**

Crises are temporal in nature, varying in intensity based on proximity to the crisis event (Coombs, 2007). The theory adopts an event-based sequence perspective of crisis to describe the value of HRD at various crisis stages, drawing on the work the Mitroff (2005) crisis management model as described in section 2.7.3. Immediately post-crisis, the focus is on *containment* with the emphasis on organisational survival. Over time, the micro environment shifts to organisational *recovery* where the focus is on redefining organisational purpose and values whilst adopting change approaches to the opportunities presented by the macro environment. *Renewal* requires embedding of the new culture and environmental scanning of the macro environment to avoid entering another crisis event. For HRD value to be achieved in a post-crisis context, it must be cognisant of the crisis stage the organisation is in so that it might provide the most appropriate approach and practices that will allow the organisation to effectively move through each crisis stage (ie from *containment* to *renewal*). Figure 7.1 above deliberately shows each stage over-lapping as these crisis stages were described by



both the phase 1 and 2 findings as not having a defined start and end points as illustrated in the statement of SL14, a Managing Director of a large commercial team: “*there are phases of this post-crisis era that need to be considered. I don’t know what they are, but I can clearly see there are phases that we went through*”.

## **7.5 Dynamic HRD roles**

HRD value is achieved by dynamic HRD roles. These are discrete practices that the HRD function must carry out, within specific stages of the crisis to meet organisational requirements. In bringing definition and description to the ‘dynamic HRD role’, the work of Watkins (1989) and more recently Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) were used along with the DSHRD Capabilities framework from Garavan et al., 2016 (see sections 2.7.11 and 2.6.5). The theory shows that these roles require HRD to develop its own ‘dynamic capability’ to sense, seize and reconfigure itself effectively to meet on-going business needs. Within the *Containment stage*, HRD should play a *Healer* role whereby it supports re-establishing trust between employees and senior leadership to drive greater engagement. HRD Voice is concerned with the ability of HRD to influence key stakeholders and align the HRD strategy with that of the organisation. Within the theory it shows that the ability to operate at a strategic level may initially be impacted by HRDs understanding of business and crisis management requirements and the role HRD has played pre-crisis. Crisis are known to be caused by a mixture of socio-technical issues. HRD by adopting a *Provocateur* role can cause the organisation to hold the mirror up to cultural issues which caused the crisis to occur to stimulate crisis learning.

As the organisation progresses through the *Recovery stage*, HRD Voice can become more amplified through on-going executive sponsorship and effective business partnering.

Adopting a *Change-Agent* role provides a way to ‘unlearn’ unhelpful organisational practices and put in place new processes, structures and communications that come out of HRD taking on an *Organisational Designer* role. Also, within the *recovery* stage is the requirement for a re-articulation of organisational purpose and values which can provide a roadmap to how the organisation seeks to embark on a journey of *recovery*. *Renaissance-man* is the dynamic HRD role that satisfies this requirement.

In the *Renewal stage*, *HRD Voice* continues to grow in strength due to on-going *HRD Investment* to embed lessons learnt, along with its role as *Dynamic Capability Developer* which ensures that the organisation develops the capabilities to deal with continued changes at a macro and micro environmental level. By operating as ‘*Problem Finders*’ HRD develops capabilities within its own function to be able to scan both the internal and external environments and ensure that the organisation moves from being reactive to one where it can leverage the workforce to achieve competitive advantage.

Figure 7.1 in section 7.1 shows that each of the dynamic HRD roles are not independent of one another, rather they recognise the need for HRD to balance the demands and expectations of multiple stakeholders in a variety of ways in a constantly changing environment that is specific to a post-crisis context.

In this section I have presented an overview of the dynamic HRD post-crisis theory, in the remainder of the chapter I will explain in more detail how the existing literature and theoretical models that were introduced in the review of the literature in Chapter 2 were used

as part of the theory development process beginning with the macro environment of *Regulatory Landscape*.

## 7.6 Theory development: macro environment - regulatory landscape

As a regulated industry, banking is required to demonstrate compliance to strict financial, conduct and risk regulations. The house of cards effect of the GFC across the global markets resulted in a much more robust set of interventions from regulators (Cohan, 2009; Aldrich et al., 2015). A priority for organisations was to prove to the regulator that not only had they the appropriate processes in place to operate with sound fiduciary practices, but also that they were taking steps to address the cultural issues which contributed to the GFC occurring in the first place. Table 7.1 below shows from the findings the properties of the category of *Regulatory Landscape*.

**Table 7.1 HRD value in macro environment: regulatory landscape**

Macro Environment	HRD Value
Regulatory landscape	Demonstrating cultural change Coaching support for leaders dealing with the regulator Delivering mandatory compliance training

Therefore, the theory developed within this study considers the influence of the macro environment on HRD value as an important component. Garavan (1991) in developing the nine characteristics of an HRD mature organisation suggested that HRD interventions should integrate either vertically or horizontally with corporate objectives. This concept of being integrated is also supported in McCracken and Wallace's (2000a) SHRD framework. Furthermore, in the modified SHRD framework, Mitsakis (2017) develops Garavan's position further by arguing that SHRD needs to consider not just horizontal and vertical integration, but also internal and external alignment. The framework that Mitsakis (2017)

presents considers the role of the macro and micro-environment as influencing SHRD, requiring HRD practices to be in his words; 'environmentally integrated'. This requires HRD to move beyond practices that assume a 'steady-state' organisational context and one that considers the impact of organisations operating in increasingly dynamic environments such as those that existed in the post-crisis period. A further benefit of Mitsakis (2017) work to this study is that it is one of the few empirical studies to consider HRD in a post-crisis context whilst also being located within the banking industry. Whilst the reference to macro-environments is not explicit in the Dynamic SHRD Capabilities framework offered by Garavan et al., 2016, it does also support the position that HRD value needs to consider the ever-changing turbulent environments that organisations are required to navigate. Therefore, through an integration of the data and the literature, I became comfortable with the inclusion of a 'macro environment' category to help describe the value of HRD in a post-crisis context.

### **7.6.1 Theory development: micro environments**

A number of the organisations represented in the study required government funding to maintain a trading position and as such, this placed additional demands on the organisation such as increased public scrutiny in the post-crisis years compared to those that were able to continue trading without additional capital support. The modified SHRD framework by Mitsakis (2017) also considers the role of micro environments that can be considered more applicable to the internal context of organisations. How organisations manage crisis is dependent on several internal factors including, organisational culture and leadership styles (Bhaduri, 2019; Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, 2017), communicating effectively (Reilly, 2008), crisis competencies (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011) and learning orientation (Brockner and James, 2008). The literature points to the fact that the internal micro-environments of each organisation can be unique., The final theory proposed in this study

identified two micro environments, '*Crisis stages*' and '*HRD investment*' that were consistent across all of the organisations represented. The process of how *HRD Investment* was included in the final theory will be discussed in the following section.

### **7.6.2 Theory development: micro environment - HRD investment**

A second micro-environment of *HRD Investment* forms a category within the theory. Crises create a context in which cost-cutting can result in reduced HRD investment (Horvath, 2010; Zavyalova, Kucherov and Tsybova, 2018). The findings highlighted that HRD value was attributed to on-going investment against a backdrop of reduced budgets. This is consistent with the findings from Mitsakis (2017) where views from employees associated SHRD maturity with the level of training practices available post-crisis. Along with executive sponsorship, *HRD Investment* was seen as strong indicator of HRD value. Presenting HRD investment as a micro environment illustrates that *HRD investment* is not a one-off activity but something the HRD function needed to justify throughout the crisis journey. The findings of this study demonstrated the role that providing meaningful ROI resulted in on-going investment as illustrated by the views of one of the BankCo senior leaders, CS06, who shared that HRD used evaluation data to "*leverage the value they had in the outputs of their programmes*" to "*build compelling and robust business cases*" for on-going investment. HRD was able to secure support for long-term development programmes that addressed cultural change and the embedding of new behavioural and operational processes as evidenced in the case-study findings. In reviewing the SHRD literature, both the modified SHRD framework (Mitsakis, 2017) and McCracken and Wallace (2000a) model emphasise the role of HRD evaluation with the former advocating for a more strategic orientated approach which this study supports. *HRD Investment* provides additional opportunity for the function to demonstrate more effective business partnering practices by conducting what

Mitsakis (2017) refers to as training needs analysis (TNA) across all organisational members as a tool for meeting future needs and facilitating organisational change. For example, the findings showed the need for HRD and business units to collaborate closely in identifying changes required by the regulator to demonstrate that individuals possessed the necessary skills and capability to undertake their roles. It also demonstrates the importance of HRD practitioners using organisational data to help make informed business decisions (Gubbins et al., 2018). The interaction between the macro environment and micro environment describes how regulatory requirements result in *HRD Investment* to meet these expectations. The findings show the importance of satisfying the regulator that risk capabilities were more developed post-crisis whilst also developing more crisis management softer skills such as feedback and sense-making to demonstrate that culture change was taking place. Changes in the macro environment such as regulation, market conditions, talent availability or industry developments such as digitisation if approached correctly can result in *HRD Investment*. The findings show that the HRD function is required to develop new approaches to design, delivery and embedding given budgetary constraints. Table 7.2 below shows the key HRD practices associated with *HRD Investment*.

**Table 7.2 HRD value in micro environment: HRD investment**

Micro-Environment	HRD Practices
HRD investment	Strategic approach to evaluation Business partnering Innovation to Design, Delivery & Embedding

The theory further suggests *HRD Investment* can be an enabler to demonstrating HRD value by leveraging both the opportunities presented by the macro environment whilst also understanding the requirements of the organisation as it moves through the crisis process.

This crisis process is discussed in the next section that looks at the second micro environmental category in the theory, specific *Crisis Stages*.

### 7.6.3 Theory development: micro environment - crisis stages

The model used to depict the theory presents the crisis stages as over-lapping in an attempt to convey that each stage was not discreet with a precise start and finish as shown in Figure 7.1 (section 7.1).

Table 7.3 below outlines the main characteristics of each crisis stage and includes the associated HRD value add practices. Section 7.7 '*dynamic HRD*' will provide a more in-depth explanation of these HRD practices and how they were outworked by specific HRD roles.

**Table 7.3 Crisis stages, characteristics and HRD value add practices**

Crisis Stage	Characteristics	HRD practices
Containment	Lessen impact of crisis Focus on survival	Dealing with emotional/psychological impact Re-establishing HRD legitimacy and credibility Challenging culture, promoting learning
Recovery	Redefine organisational purpose Develop new structures and processes	Developing HRD influence Championing change Embedding new culture Aligning HRD practices with new structures and processes
Renewal	Embed learning Reposition for growth	Dynamic capability building Future proofing the organisation

Consistent with the CM literature, participants adopted a temporal paradigm as they recalled the post-crisis period, using several specific stages to illustrate examples of HRD value. This

was aligned with the aims of a grounded theory study which seeks to capture the ‘lived experiences’ of the phenomena under investigation. In answering the research question, the data pointed to HRD value add practices being associated within a particular stage of the crisis process. What was required by HRD in the immediate aftermath of the GFC in supporting around employee engagement was different to the need to upskill on digital capabilities in more recent years. By focusing on the specific crisis stages and paying attention to what stakeholders shared as to HRD value within each stage, I was able to develop a ‘dynamic role’ component to describe HRD value that will be explored in further detail in section 7.7 ‘*dynamic HRD*’. The inclusion of an event based sequential approach in the theory (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013) presented a challenge in that linear models of crisis have come in for criticism on being overly simplistic and not considering the peculiarities of how crisis progress (Langley, 1999). However, in attempting to bring definition to the micro environment ‘*Crisis Stages*’, after reviewing the crisis literature, I decided to use elements the Mitroff (2005) model for the final theory. As mentioned in section 2.7.3, Mitroff’s framework is the most widely cited in the crisis literature and its approach to describing crisis was consistent with how participants represented their experiences albeit that there was no definition around exact beginning and endings of each stage. The three specific crisis stages that are included in the final theory are ‘*containment, recovery and renewal*’. The ‘*renewal*’ stage combined Mitroff’s (2005) ‘No-fault learning’ and ‘Redesign’ stages as the term ‘*renewal*’ was used by participants to describe the journey out of the crisis.

The research question sought to understand different stakeholder perceptions (including those of HR/D practitioners) of HRD value in a post-crisis context. The findings showed that crises create a unique change characteristic to the internal micro environment compared to the on-going change that organisations are facing through more generalised societal, environmental,



and technological developments. These include the need to demonstrate cultural change to the regulator and the importance of ‘unlearning pre-crisis behaviours as illustrated by the views of SL02 who described the change agenda as a means to “*re-train the muscle memory so that we have new ways of behaving*” (SL02). By detailing the specific crisis stages, the theory provides a framework for HRD to understand comprehensively the requirements for the function to add value within crisis stages. Understanding of what stage, the organisation is at can support HRD practitioners in providing strategic direction to the business thereby adding to their ability to bring strategic value in the midst of chaotic times. This will be discussed further in chapter 9 looking at the practical utility of the theory.

#### **7.6.4 Summary: theory development - environmental categories**

In this section I have outlined the theory development process that identified the inclusion of three environmental categories in the final theory. Components of the modified SHRD framework (Mitsakis, 2017) along with the conceptual Dynamic SHRD Capabilities framework (Garavan et al., 2016) were explored and found to provide the best fit to the data. Their emphasis on the need for ‘environmentally integrated’ HRD practices in time of business and economic uncertainty were relevant to the context of the study. The inclusion of micro environments supported the findings, describing organisational specific contexts within which HRD attempted to demonstrate its value. The micro environment of *HRD Investment* built on the components of Mitsakis’ framework that connecting strategic HRD evaluation with on-going budget support. The literature that associates HRD value with *HRD Investment* (Horvath, 2010; Zavyalova, Kucherov and Tsybova, 2018) was also used in the development of this component of the theory. The findings also identified that HRD value was associated with the specific crisis stages the organisation was experiencing. As a result, components of the Mitroff (2005) model (*containment, recovery, renewal*) were used to provide a temporal

dimension to the theory. The theory provides empirical evidence to support an event-based sequence approach to crisis with the findings identifying that both as individuals and organisations, there had been a journey from the moment the crisis occurred to the time when the data collection took place. Crises are complex organisational phenomena consisting of socio-technical elements (Turner and Pidgeon, 1997). The theory presented does not seek to answer questions on how organisations progress through a crisis as this would require investigation outside of the scope of this PhD study looking at other factors such as board dynamics and strategic management decision-making. However, based on the findings, the theory provides further empirical support for the need for HRD to be ‘environmentally integrated’ to address the specific requirements of organisational stakeholders presented in a post-crisis context. In addition, the theory identifies the requirement for ‘dynamic HRD’ by adopting distinct roles at each stage of the crisis process. The following section will explore how the component of ‘dynamic HRD’ was developed.

### **7.7 Theory development process associated with dynamic HRD roles: overview**

As noted earlier, each crisis stage created specific requirements for HRD to support the organisation in successfully progressing through the crisis process. To deliver these requirements, the findings showed that HRD was required to adopt a dynamic approach by assuming several roles, simultaneously within each stage. The theory shows that not all roles were required to be maintained throughout the entire crisis process. For example, the *Healer* role in which HRD was required to provide emotional and psychological support and used practices such as storytelling, became redundant as a role once the organisation progressed from *containment* into *recovery*. The representation of the roles in Figure 7.1 (section 7.1) as ‘clusters’ within each stage describes the requirement for HRD to develop ‘dynamic

capabilities’ (Garavan et al., 2016) to meet organisational requirements during periods of extreme change and turbulence. The following section will explain the development process for the ‘dynamic HRD’ component of the theory.

### 7.7.1 Mapping dynamic roles to crisis stages

The findings identified eight specific dynamic HRD roles that explained stakeholder perceptions of HRD value in the post-crisis period. The study showed that these roles were required to be displayed simultaneously by the HRD function within a crisis stage, but not consistently across all stages. Based on the empirical evidence from the study, I was able to build on the conceptual model of HRD/CM roles and crisis stages presented in section 2.7.5 and empirically ground specific roles to crisis stages as described in Table 7.4 below.

**Table 7.4 Mapping dynamic HRD roles**

Crisis Stage	HRD practices	HRD Role
Containment	Dealing with emotional/psychological impact Re-establishing HRD legitimacy and credibility Challenging culture, promoting learning	HRD Voice Healer Provocateur
Recovery	Developing HRD influence Championing change Embedding new culture Aligning HRD practices with new structures and processes	HRD Voice Change-Agent Renaissance Man Org Designer
Renewal	Dynamic capability building Future proofing the organisation	HRD Voice Problem-finder Dynamic Capability Developer

Given the adoption of a CGT approach, which seeks to capture the lived experiences of the phenomena under investigation, the data collection provided a rich text of metaphors that were used to describe HRD value and the role of the function. Some of this was driven by

those interviewed who were HR/D practitioners and would have been familiar with the use of HRD metaphors from the literature such as those used by Watkins (1989). However senior leaders also, used terms such as ‘healer’, ‘provocateur’, ‘silent partner’ ‘change agent’ and ‘organisational conscience’ to describe HRD roles. Theory development in CGT is acknowledged to be a co-creation of meaning between the researcher, data and literature and I wanted to be mindful of any un-due emphasis that I would bring into the theory by using HRD metaphors to describe HRD roles. In turning to the literature, I was encouraged to discover three reasons that supported their inclusion. Firstly, metaphors can be useful in adding meaning to concepts and developing new theories (Cornelissen, 2004). Secondly, the importance to understand and apply metaphors in HRD research has been highlighted (Kuchinke, 2001; Short, 2000), and thirdly studies have identified the effective use of metaphors within the HRD field (Ardichvili, 2001; Gubbins et al., 2012; Hutchins and Wang, 2008). Having identified the legitimacy for the inclusion of HRD metaphors in the theory, my focus turned to mapping the findings against existing HRD metaphor literature.

### **7.7.2 Watkins (1989) five HRD role metaphors**

The work of Watkins (1989) provided a logical place to begin the integration of the literature with the findings of the study. Her original five philosophical metaphors are well established in HRD literature and as noted in section 2.7.4 1 have been used to articulate HRD’s contribution to other disciplines such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Jang and Ardichvili, 2015, 2020) and CM (Hutchins and Wang, 2008). Given the inter-disciplinary nature of crisis, Watkins’ roles were deemed to be relevant given that each one is deeply grounded in HRD’s diverse philosophical foundations including but not limited to systems theory, gestalt psychology, action science, critical theory, and human capital theory (Watkins, 1989).

Whilst the HRD metaphors used by Watkins (1989) were helpful, I felt that several of the descriptors didn't capture the richness contained with the findings (see Table 2.1 for original definitions). As a result, the final theory provides an updated crisis-specific description for two of the five (change agent and organisational designer), whilst refining the metaphor title for the remaining three to ensure a better alignment with the data. Providing these modifications to Watkins's (1989) work can provide further utility for their use in helping explain organisational theory and this contribution will be discussed more fully in chapter 8. The updated titles and descriptions are described below in Table 7.5, along with a brief commentary on the rationale for why these changes were made.

**Table 7.5 Adaption of Watkins (1989) metaphors to dynamic HRD roles**

HRD Metaphor	Description
Problem Solver to Problem Finder	HRD practitioners are proactive in scanning, evaluating and acting on changes in the internal and external environments which could prove to be a threat or opportunity for competitive advantage
Change-agent	HRD practitioners facilitate unlearning of the pre-crisis culture to support individual and organisational change
Empowerer/Meaning-maker to Provocateur	HRD practitioners promote critical reflection as a challenge to barriers to learning and alignment of personal and organisational values
Organisational designer	HRD practitioners use their knowledge of the limitations of prior structures and partnership with the wider HR function in the creation of new organisational structures and processes that aligned with crisis management goals
Human Capital Developer to Dynamic Capability developer	HRD practitioners develop dynamic capabilities at individual and organisational level to achieve competitive advantage in dynamic environments

### 7.7.2.1 Problem solver to problem finder

In the *renewal* stage of the crisis sequence, the need to embed lessons learnt and future proof against emergent threats and opportunities requires HRD to proactively scan changes in both the macro and micro environments. In the context of a post-crisis environment Hutchins and

Wang (2008) suggest that HRD practitioners would best serve organisational goals by moving from a problem-solving approach to one of problem-finding which was consistent with the findings from the study. The shift to problem-finder positions HRD as being on the more proactive in understanding and interpreting the requirements for the organisation rather than playing more of a subservient, reactive role which was a criticism of pre-crisis behaviours. An example of how HRD demonstrated this from the findings was seen in the BankCo where the HRD function built a set of learning practices around the concept of looking outside the bank to raise awareness of new ways of working from other industries such as technology and sports (section 6.14.1) The inclusion of scanning capabilities is also consistent with the modifications made by Mitsakis (2017) to his SHRD framework where SHRD maturity is associated with being able to see, understand and initiate on environmental changes rather than operate with more of a short-term mindset.

### **7.7.2.2 Change agent**

Crisis are brought about by a mixture of socio-technical failures (Turner and Pidegon, 1997) and the GFC was no different in this regard with issues at both a cultural and operational level. The definition of *Change Agent* in the final theory modifies that provided by Watkins by including the requirement for HRD to facilitate the unlearning of the pre-crisis culture. The notion of unlearning draws from a Lewinian view of change which requires a freeze/unfreeze approach in which the organisation unlearns unhelpful practices and applies new learning as they seek to rebuild and recover from the crisis (Wang, 2008). Unlearning is a process of abandoning the dominating ideas, disconfirming past programs, embracing new ideas, and engendering change (Nystrom and Starbuck, 2015). In the context of crisis Wang (2008) argues that if organisations simply adopt traditional change management approaches without taking the steps to ‘unlearn’, they will stay at a level of change that is more

reactionary in nature, addressing changes in process, structure, rather than addressing more fundamental change aimed at changing mindsets, behaviours and values.

### **7.7.2.3 Empowerer/meaning-maker to provocateur**

*Provocateur* is the dynamic role through which HRD practitioners promote critical reflection as a challenge to barriers to learning and alignment of personal and organisational values.

Many of the participants spoke about being exposed to uncomfortable learning experiences which caused them to deeply question the role that they had played in creating conditions for the crisis to occur. The views of SL13, a CEO of a UK bank, illustrate this point where he states that HRD practices caused him and his team to “*look at themselves in the mirror & reflect on the role that they had played in allowing crisis conditions to develop*” (SL13). An autocratic culture with a tendency to scapegoat individuals and a centralised decision-making process were known factors that contributed to the GFC (Whittle and Mueller, 2012). My decision to modify the HRD role from empowerer/meaning maker to provocateur was based on two reasons. I wanted to use a phrase that captured the energy that was associated with this category in the data collection. Whilst the findings showed that there were often conflicting views regarding HRD value from different stakeholders on the same HRD practice, there was a consistent agreement on its positive role in provoking and stimulating learning and critical reflection. Provocative was used as a term by several participants when describing the HRD function. Secondly, the learning from crisis literature highlights several barriers to effective learning including dealing with leaders’ hubris (Ford, 2006) and defensiveness and denial (Kovoor-Misara and Nathan, 2000). By-passing these barriers required a strength of resolve from HRD along with the use of innovative design and delivery mechanisms. The use of provocateur was seen to be consistent with this strength of resolve required by HRD along with a *Change-Agent* approach.

#### **7.7.2.4 Organisational designer**

Aligned to the *Change Agent* role of unlearning unhelpful practices, the inclusion of *Organisational Designer* in the theory requires HRD to use their knowledge of the limitations of prior structures and partnership with the wider HR function in the creation of new organisational structures and processes that aligned with crisis management goals. The positive role that the wider HR function can play in bringing about organisational re-design in a post-crisis context has been suggested by Zagelmeyer and Gollan (2012) who observe that as a function HR and by extension HRD are best placed to understand the processes and structures that created the crisis. The organisational designer role in the theory sits within the *recovery* stage of the crisis sequence as this stage is characterised by the re-definition of new organisational purpose and values which are accompanied by changes in structures, processes and communications.

#### **7.7.2.5 Human capital developer to dynamic capability developer**

The findings identified that HRD value was attributed to its ability to develop individual and organisation capabilities that were able to sense, seize and reconfigure to changes in both the macro and micro environments. Rather than simply focus on returning the economic value that Watkins' 'human capital developer' refers to, my decision to use '*Dynamic Capability Developer*' was seen to be a better representation on three levels. Firstly, as mentioned in previous sections, the post-crisis was characterised by change and turbulence, hence the inclusion of the term 'dynamic'. Secondly, a criticism of HRD was that by overly aligning its practices with purely economic outcomes it contributed to conditions that caused the crisis to occur. Thirdly, the dynamic capability literature identifies three dynamic capabilities of sensing environmental conditions, seizing these opportunities and reconfiguring operational



routines (Teece, 2007) which were consistent with the findings of the study. The findings showed that senior management and HRD appeared to recognise their short-comings pre-crisis and allowed HRD to refocus endeavours on building capability rather than trying to purely deliver economic value as evidenced by the BankCo group-wide programme that was focused on developing a more customer-centric mindset and skills.

#### **7.7.2.6 Summary: modifying Watkin's (1989) five HRD metaphors**

In this section I have outlined how the findings supported modifying Watkins five HRD metaphors (1989) to describe how HRD value was achieved through the adoption of 'dynamic HRD' by taking on several co-current roles in each of the crisis stages. As part of the theory development process, mapping Watkins's metaphors against the study findings identified several gaps. For example, within the recovery stage, the need to re-define organisational purpose along with values and behaviours was regarded as an important role that HRD played, however it wasn't adequately represented in Watkins's (1989) work as her original premise was to describe broad HRD roles, not crisis specific practices which has been the focus of this study.

In seeking to identify other role-based descriptors within the literature, the Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man (MHR) framework developed by Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) was assessed as being a suitable model to integrate with the data and in the next section I will demonstrate how their framework was used in the theory development process.

## **7.8 MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018))**

Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) argue that traditional CM approaches often place humans at the bottom of the list when it comes to crisis whilst emphasising the recovery of systems, operations, infrastructures, and public relations. Including components of their framework in the final theory was based on three reasons. Firstly, their framework describes the roles that HR and by extension HRD plays in supporting organisations through the crisis process. Secondly, given that the authors view crises from an event based sequential approach, their stance aligned with the findings from my study. Finally, the framework suggests that HR/D can provide value when it focuses its attention on the organisational needs at each stage of the crisis process and adopts specific roles. Given the research question of this study was concerned with HRD value in a post-crisis context, the MHR framework first role of ‘mentor’ which considers a pre-crisis context was not deemed suitable to use. The other two roles that they propose; *Healer* and *Renaissance Man* were used in the final theory as they provided the most appropriate description of HRD value in delivering a particular role within a specific crisis stage. The rationale behind their inclusion will be discussed below.

### **7.8.1 Healer**

*Healer* is the role through which HRD practitioners can support individuals and the organisation through the emotional aftermath of crisis, rebuilding trust. Crisis can be seen as major acts of betrayal with employees’ trust in senior leadership being called into question and may be accompanied in extreme cases by experiences of trauma and emotional distress (Mitroff, 2005). The views of HRD23, a HRD director illustrate some of the issues the GFC had caused including “*issues around breakdown of the psychological contract, engagement and trust*”. The macro environment of regulatory change and the intense public scrutiny in what was referred to by participants as ‘banker bashing’ created a challenging context for

HRD to operate in during the immediate aftermath of the crisis (*containment stage*).

Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) suggest that HR/D is best placed as a function to provide the necessary support and structures that can allow for employee feelings to be listened to, whilst re-establishing trust and driving individual engagement. The use of their term '*Healer*' resonated with me based on the term being used by a number of the participants during the data collection phase. The final theory depicted in Figure 7.1 shows that once the organisation progressed through the *containment* stage, the requirement for the '*Healer*' role became less relevant as the organisation moved into a stage of *renewal* and re-positioning for growth.

### **7.8.2 Renaissance man**

*Renaissance Man* is the dynamic HRD role that facilitates an articulation and embedding of new organisational purpose, culture and associated values/behaviours. By adopting the role of *Renaissance Man*, HRD can alter employees' perspectives from that of a traumatic incident, to one where the lessons can be used to inform future behaviour and build positive change (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). This was illustrated in the views of CS04, a Head of Product within the BankCo, who shared that the articulation of a new organisational purpose helped "*signal the intent that we were moving forward to both the market and our staff*" (CS04).

One of the consistent themes from participants was that the GFC was a turning point in how banks viewed and treated their customers. Pre-crisis, the focus was on wealth maximisation and shareholder value. Post-crisis, there was a journey to rediscover the original intent of banking, one that placed the customer at the centre. Participants within the BankCo referred to this as PVV (Purpose, Vision and Values) which involved organisational wide practices that outlined not only the PVV but also the associated leadership behaviours that would

underpin the new culture and how they fitted into the journey to recovery (see section 6.11.1 for further examples).

### **7.8.3 Summary: MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018).**

Thus far, in explaining the development of ‘dynamic HRD’, the theory has drawn heavily on the established work of Watkins’s (1989) five HRD metaphors and the more recent MHR framework developed by Nizamidou and Vouzas, (2018). In reviewing the theory and the findings, I felt that an important theme was missing; how HRD found and developed its voice during the post-crisis period. In the final section I will explain the development of the dynamic HRD role of ‘*HRD Voice*’ within the theory.

## **7.9 Theory development of HRD Voice**

The findings describe *HRD Voice* as the ability of HRD to build effective strategic relationships with senior stakeholder to help influence the HRD agenda with organisational goals. As noted in section 2.6.1 empirical studies showed that the crisis ‘back-footed’ HRD (Keeble- Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). As a result, the strength of HRD contribution was seen to be weakened in the immediate aftermath of the crisis (*containment* stage). Others have looked at the extent to which HRD can play a strategic role through the extent to which it has a voice in the development of an organisations strategic outlook (Garavan, 2007, Holbeche, 2009, Mitsakis, 2014b). It could be argued that the debate about the strategic role of HRD orbits around the strength of its voice. The more strategic the function is, the greater the likelihood that it will have a strong voice within the organisation and be able to influence key stakeholders. With the debate still ongoing around the ability of HRD to have a strong voice at the strategic management table, the findings of the study provide a unique perspective on how HRD can move from a

weakened position post-crisis, to one where its value is recognised. The dynamic HRD post-crisis theory shows HRD developing from a predominantly silent role in the *containment* stage, to one where in the *renewal* stage the extent of HRD had significantly increased. In an attempt to show this amplification of *HRD Voice*, the model in Figure 7.1 (section 7.1) depicts *HRD Voice* role increasing in size over the latter two crisis stages. The findings identified that *HRD Voice* was attributed to two relational components, executive sponsorship and effective business-partnering. This position is also consistent with the indicators of SHRD maturity as suggested by Mitsakis (2017) in his modified SHRD framework with HRD executives playing an active role at executive level and the function being proactive in business partnering. The theory explains why HRD Voice was elevated from a pre-crisis position to that in the renewal stage. It identifies that HRD was strategic in re-establishing legitimacy and creditability with senior stakeholders in the containment stage, strengthening these relationships in the recovery stage by having a greater understanding of CM goals and then enhancing HRD's influence with senior stakeholders in the renewal stage by continuing to align HRD practices with organisational CM goals.

## **7.10 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I have outlined how the '*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*' was developed through an iterative process of engaging with the data and the literature. Defining the 13 core categories that were developed through the data analysis stage and integrating them with the existing literature allowed me to develop the final theory. A contribution of the theory is that it identified that HRD value is context specific and is impacted by a number of macro and micro environments. It extends our understanding of the need for HRD practitioners to be aligned with the dimensions of the external and internal environment (Garavan et al., 2019; Harney, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). The demands placed on HRD to demonstrate value to

multiple stakeholders during ever-changing contexts requires the function to develop dynamic capabilities. These are evidenced in the roles that HRD is required to carry out at each stage of the post-crisis continuum. In describing the process of theory development four bodies of literature that were introduced in chapter 2 were expanded upon. These were Mitsakis' modified SHRD framework (2017), the DSHRD Capabilities framework developed by Garavan et al., 2016; Mitroff's (2005) event-based crisis management model (2005) and finally the work of Watkins (1989) and Nizamindou and Vouzas, (2018) on HRD metaphors/roles.

Having provided an explanation for the development of the theory, in the next chapter I will use the '*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*' to discuss how the theory contributes to original knowledge to the on-going debate around HRD value.

## **8 Chapter 8 Discussion of theoretical contributions**

In this chapter I outline the key contributions to the HRD and Crisis Management (CM) literature that resulted from carrying out a grounded theory study aimed at addressing the research question; *'How do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish banking sector?'*. The specific context for the study was the UK and Irish Banking sector following the Global Financial Crash (GFC) in 2008 with data being collected several years following the initial collapse of the markets.

In section 1.3, I identified that within the academic literature the value of HRD within an organisation continues to be an on-going debate (Han et al., 2017; Stewart and Rigg, 2011). To this point the literature has looked at whether the focus is on organisational effectiveness (Francis, Holbeche and Reddington, 2012), performance or learning (Lee, 2015), the strategic influence of HRD (Garavan 2007, McCracken and Wallace, 2000a; 2000b, Mitsakis, 2017), and whether the focus should be on individual vs organisational performance (Alagaraja, Cumberland and Choi, 2015). A concern is that the majority of academic attention has been based on organisational contexts that assume a steady state and as a result there is a lack of understanding of how HRD value might differ in more dynamic contexts such as those created by the crisis. In reviewing the literature, I position an argument (in section 2.6) that suggests theoretical frameworks that encourage HRD environmental scanning are a more useful approach to apply to understand HRD value, given the dynamic contexts of crises. However, whilst SHRD models have encouraged environmentally integrated HRD practices they lack detail on how this differs in a crisis context. I also argue that dynamic capabilities (DCs) support environmental scanning and these capabilities should be developed not only by HRD practitioners but also developed within the organisation to support CM objectives.

To date there has been limited research that places DCs in a crisis context. Attempts at understanding HRD's role in the development of knowledge, skills and capabilities that support CM objectives in a strategic manner (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009) has largely been through conceptual approaches (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) with theorising often drawing on secondary data (Dirani et al., 2020; Wang, 2008, Wooten and James, 2008). Whilst these conceptual approaches are useful in developing frameworks to understand HRD's role in CM, the literature acknowledges that there is a gap in empirical based research that explains the 'how' and 'what' of these HRD practices. There is also a lack of empirical knowledge on the specific value roles that HRD should adopt within each crisis stage (Dirani et al., 2020; Hutchins and Wang, 2008; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). In section 2.7.11, I suggest that using role metaphors which act as rich descriptors of HRD practices required in CM along with an event-based sequential perspective on crisis can better explain the complexity of HRD practices required in a crisis context more easily, and in sections 7.7 and 7.8, I show how the findings support the use of metaphors to explain HRD value. Several useful empirical studies have explored stakeholder perception of HRD value post-GFC, their findings show that HRD was 'back-footed' as a result of the crisis and the strategic nature of their role was questioned (Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). However, methodological limitations in terms of investigating the breadth of the crisis process results in a lack of understanding of how HRD value may change over time depending on the crisis stage an organisation is in.

The chapter is structured as follows. Initially a summary of the findings will provide an overview of how the study answered the research question. As noted in the previous chapter, a key contribution of the study is the development of the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*.



Given that the reader in sections 7.6 - 7.9 has already been presented with an understanding of how the theory was developed from the findings and existing literature, along with an explanation of the theory, the remainder of this chapter will focus on discussing three meta key contributions addressing the following areas. Firstly, how the study provides new empirical evidence that explains how HRD value is impacted both positively and negatively by its knowledge of CM will be discussed, along with important new knowledge and understanding as to why HRD did not have a more thorough understanding of CM practices pre-crisis. Secondly, how the study contributes to and extends the literature that argues for environmentally integrated HRD practices that support organisational goals at each stage of the crisis journey will be presented. Finally, how the study contributes to the DCs literature by the presentation of new empirical evidence that shows HRD value is achieved when HRD adopt dynamic roles and capabilities that scan environmental changes and leverage these opportunities to deliver value for the organisation. The study provides new empirical evidence that develops our knowledge and understanding of stakeholder requirements including those of HR/D practitioners in a crisis context and the specific HRD roles and practices that are perceived as adding value.

In the final concluding chapter in the thesis (chapter 9), I will then consider the implications for research and practice along with methodological strengths and limitations of the study with recommendations for further research. In the next section I will provide a summary of the findings addressing how the study answered the research question.

## 8.1 Summary of the findings

The research question which guided the data collection was “*How do organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context within the UK and Irish Banking sector*”.

The findings showed that HRD value is subjective with often conflicting views from different stakeholders on the same HR activity (Jensen et al., 2013; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017, Mitsakis, 2021). HRD value is explained as the capacity of HRD to deliver environmentally integrated HRD strategies, plans and processes that align with specific CM organisational goals. Furthermore, HRD value was explained as the capacity of HRD to display dynamic capabilities by adopting specific roles that supported the CM agenda. The GFC created an enabler for HRD to operate given the macro environment of changes in the *Regulatory Landscape*. Consistent with CM models (Mitroff, 2005; Turner, 1994; Wooten and James, 2008), was the views from participants that organisations progressed through several crisis stages which are referred to in the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* as ‘*Containment, Recovery and Renewal*.’ The theory that was developed in the study explains specific dynamic HRD roles that help deliver HRD value. Crises are complex by nature and in reviewing the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*, consideration must be taken to see how each dynamic role overlaps and inter-connects with the other. The impact of another micro (internal) environmental factor, *HRD Investment* was viewed by participants as demonstration of HRD value, in the ability to secure on-going investment for HRD practices during times when there was widespread cost-cutting taking place. The associated organisational goals, HRD practices and roles that align with each crisis stage are summarised in Table 8.1 on the following page.

**Table 8.1 Crisis stages, organisational goals, HRD practices and HRD roles**

Crisis Stage	Characteristics	HRD practices	HRD Role
Containment	Lessen impact of crisis Focus on survival	Dealing with emotional/psychological impact Re-establishing HRD legitimacy and creditability Challenging culture, promoting learning	HRD Voice Healer Provocateur
Recovery	Redefine organisational purpose Develop new structures and processes	Strengthening HRD influence Championing change Embedding new culture Aligning HRD practices with new structures and processes	HRD Voice Change-Agent Renaissance Man Org Designer
Renewal	Embed learning Reposition for growth	Enhancing HRD influence Dynamic capability building Future proofing the organisation	HRD Voice Problem-Finder Dynamic Capability Developer

Having provided a summary of the research findings, the following section will explore how the findings contribute to the existing HRD and CM literature beginning with a discussion on how HRD value is impacted by understanding its role in crisis management.

## **8.2 Identifying that HRD value is impacted by understanding its role in crisis management**

Whilst Hutchins (2008) viewed HRD practitioners as insufficiently informed about crisis management since CM had not been addressed by the HRD academic community in any significant way and Wang (2019) sees opportunities for HRD scholars to tap into CM, this study empirically examined HRD practitioners in the context of the GFC post-crisis period. The study identified key areas where knowledge and understanding on the part of HRD was missing, and the consequences of these absences. Specifically, new empirical evidence

addresses the impact on HRD value when it fails to understand its role in CM. Furthermore, the findings provide evidence to extend the literature and answer the question why HRD does not have a better understanding of its role in CM.

### **8.2.1 Impact on HRD value when crisis management knowledge is lacking**

The evidence from this study provides new empirical evidence that extends the knowledge on HRD value post-crisis. The design of this study covered a longer segment of the post-crisis period compared to other studies such as that by Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017. As such, this study is able to provide a more in-depth analysis of how HRD value is associated with applying HRD practices to CM organisational goals throughout the post-crisis period. The findings showed that it was some time after the crisis occurred before HRD developed adequate knowledge and understanding of CM and was able to provide value as illustrated by the views of CSHRD03 in section 6.14.2 who shared how in the *renewal* stage their team were adopting practices from High Reliability Organisations (HRO's). HRD practitioners within the organisations represented in the study were not prepared for the GFC and did not initially have an adequate understanding of the role that it should play in delivering effective crisis responses. The study extends our knowledge of the impact on HRD credibility to a crisis context when HRD practitioners fail to possess the necessary technical and professional knowledge (Aldrich et al., 2015). The views of SL16, illustrate the belief that HRD should have had a better understanding of CM practices, "*HRD should have had a crisis management playbook, for what was required in a situation like this [referring to the crisis]*". The findings provide new empirical evidence to show that stakeholders expect their HRD team to possess CM knowledge and expertise.

The study provides new empirical evidence to that of Mitsakis (2017) regarding concerns over HRD's ability to act strategically post crisis. His field research showed limited support from stakeholders that HRD acted a strategic partner in helping shape organisational goals post-crisis. However, the findings from this study show that HRD recovered from an ineffective start in the early part of the *containment* stage to a place where they were operating more strategically by the time the organisation had moved into the *recovery* stage, and beyond that into the *renewal* stage. A key finding from this study was HRD developing a better understanding of CM practices which were delivered through the various dynamic HRD roles. Therefore, I would argue that the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* that was developed in this study provides a useful model when investigating HRD value in a post-crisis context as it considers the entire post-crisis period (*containment, recovery and renewal*), rather than simply focusing on a shorter time period following a crisis event.

The findings provide further knowledge and understanding that explain why HRD did not have a better understanding of CM before the GFC occurred. Two social processes were identified, CM was not a term widely used and therefore HRD lacked understanding and secondly HRD's role pre-crisis was largely restricted to operating as a training provider.

### **8.2.2 Crisis management as a discipline not understood by HRD**

The study provides empirical evidence that extends the view that there is a general lack of awareness within HRD research and practice of crisis models and that a gap exists between the two topics. As noted earlier, authors such as Hutchins (2008), Wooten and James (2008) have based their reasoning for this gap since CM has not been the subject of interest from the HRD academic community. The findings provide new knowledge illustrating that this gap applied not only to academics but also to banking HRD practitioners. The majority of HRD

practitioners interviewed acknowledged that pre-crisis they did not have an adequate understanding of CM models as illustrated by the views of HRD09, “*we [HRD] had no blueprint for what to do in a crisis*” (section 5.2.2). It was a term that HRD felt applied more to a High Reliability Organisation (HRO) context rather than a discipline that had applicability within the banking sector. Section 2.7.2. has addressed the literature that argues that the application of HRO’s to mainstream organisations remains limited (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). The findings from this study provide new empirical evidence that adds to this literature by showing that banking had not understood the relevance of HRO practices within its own context. However, the example of CHR03 within the BankCo (section 6.14.2) shows that following the crisis, HRD adopted several HRO practices, and I would argue that there is value in CM HRO practices being adopted by mainstream organisations. The findings also provide new understanding on how HRD practitioners were able to make sense of CM models and apply practices that supported organisational goals. An example being the statement of HRD08 (section 5.6.2) who described how their team had used crisis case studies to help design cultural change programmes. Decision-making toolkits used within the BankCo were based on CM principles designed to promote greater sense-making and reflexive critique (section 6.15.2) which provides further examples of how HRD practitioners were able over time to successfully adopt CM practices.

A further reason for HRD not having a clear knowledge of CM was explained by BankCo senior leaders and focus group stakeholders who saw HRD as largely operating as a training provider pre-crisis which had an impact on HRD value once the crisis occurred.

### **8.2.3 Crisis management consequences when HRD operates in a training provider role**

The findings provide new knowledge and understanding on the impact to HRD value when it is limited to operating as a training provider and extends this to consequences within the crisis context. If HRD operates as a training provider then it can act as a barrier to the role it plays in understanding crisis management according to Wang, Hutchins and Garavan (2009, p.22). The study provides empirical evidence that extends our understanding of what these barriers might be and the impact it can have on HRD value. In section 6.6.1, BankCo participants described HRD's role pre-crisis as largely subservient to the organisation, operating with limited voice in a largely autocratic environment. As a result, pre-crisis, HRD was largely limited to delivering general learning and development initiatives rather than operating in a strategic capacity. In doing so, criticism was levelled at HRD that it aligned itself too much with the wealth maximisation strategies known to bring about the GFC (MacKenzie, Garavan, Carbery, 2012, 2014). In the words of CS07, HRD failed to provide a "*control & check to the toxic culture*". However, these were the strategic objectives of the organisation at the time, and in this sense HRD could argue that it was aligned strategically with the organisational objectives.

Based on the findings, I would argue that by failing to understand CM practices, such as environmental scanning HRD did lose sight of the culture agenda by not acting as the conscience of the organisation (Martin and Gollan, 2012). As a result, it lost the opportunity to implement a set of strategies, processes and policies that could have acted as a counterbalance to the existing culture and challenged managerial behaviour. The study provides empirical evidence to better understand the criticism that some within the HRD academic community levelled at HRD for aligning itself too much with the wealth

maximisation strategies that existed pre-crisis (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012, 2014; Gold and Bratton, 2014) and the resulting negative impact this had on HRD value. It highlights the view that HRD often operates in a context where it must deal with issues around power, influence and politics, whereby it may feel the need to compromise. Yet CM principles and practices can play a role in dealing with these issues giving HRD a stronger mandate to bring a different perspective to management decision-making as evidenced by HRD being able to adopt a *Provocateur* role along with the evidence from the BankCo that several years on from the crisis, *HRD Voice* was stronger, and the organisation continued to implement CM practices.

#### **8.2.4 Summary: Identifying that HRD value is impacted by understanding its role in crisis management**

The study provides new knowledge and understanding on how HRD value is impacted by the extent to which it has an appropriate understanding of CM practices. The design of this study shows the methodological value of research that focuses on a longer post-crisis period than other empirical studies such as Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2015) and Mitsakis (2017). The study extends the knowledge of those who have suggested that CM has tended to be overlooked by HRD practitioners such as Hutchins, (2008); Zulkarnaini et al., (2019) and provides new understanding on reasons why HRD might not understand CM. It identifies that CM knowledge is expected by stakeholders as evidence of required technical and professional knowledge (Aldrich et al., 2015). Recognising the applicability of practices from industries such as HRO's and guarding against abdicated CM responsibility to others could ensure that HRD takes more responsibility for crisis preparation. The study showed that this pro-active and preventative approach was not adopted by HRD, rather pre-crisis it overly focused on alignment with strategic wealth maximisation goals. Not having the ability to scan



and sense weak signals that the pre-crisis culture displayed highlights the lack of understanding HRD had for practices such as sense-making. It highlights the importance of HRD practitioners developing environmental scanning capabilities and the usefulness of theoretical frameworks such as the SHRD maturity framework for HRD to act in a strategic manner (Mitsakis, 2017). The findings show that when HRD operates only as a training provider rather than a strategic partner, then it may lose an ability to challenge and bring insights that would make an organisation more resilient to crisis.

A second meta contribution shows that HRD was able to demonstrate value through the delivery of environmentally integrated HRD practices that supported organisational goals at each stage of the crisis journey. This will be discussed in the next section.

### **8.3 Providing new empirical evidence on HRD practices that support organisational crisis management goals**

This study provides new empirical evidence that extends our knowledge and understanding of the nature of a crisis event that was offered in section 1.0 by Coombs (2007).

*“Sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organisation’s operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat” (Coombs, 2007, p. 39).*

The findings show the impact a sudden and unexpected crisis event can have on an organisation and the knock-on effect this has on HRD by not being what Pearson and Mitroff (2019) refer to as ‘crisis-prepared’. The empirical evidence demonstrated that several years after the GFC, banks were still experiencing change and transformation to their operating

processes. Given the long tail of the GFC I would suggest that Coombs crisis definition could be updated to include *ongoing disruption* of operations as noted below:

*“Sudden and unexpected event that threatens **ongoing** disruption to an organisation’s operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat*

Whilst it is widely written that crises follow an ideal type of event sequence (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; Mitroff, 2005; Turner, 1994), this study extends our knowledge by its empirical event-based approach. The organisational goals and objectives within each crisis stage are well documented and present opportunities for HRD to develop CM capabilities that support these goals (Bhaduri, 2019; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Hutchins and Wang, 2008). However, much of this work is conceptual in nature or limited in scope to single case studies. The design of this study provided an opportunity for new empirical evidence to be generated from a range of stakeholders across a wide number of organisations along with an in-depth case study. The following three sections will discuss new empirical evidence generated by the study that considers the importance of environmental scanning capabilities required by HRD post-crisis if it is to demonstrate value to its stakeholders. Secondly, the study also extends research that considers the role of public enquiries in crisis recovery and how this may influence HRD practices. Thirdly, new empirical evidence on the benefit of re-articulating organisational purpose as an aid to post-crisis recovery also extends the knowledge of CM practices.

### **8.3.1 Environmentally integrated HRD practices**

The findings provide new empirical evidence that extends the discussion on the need for HRD practices to be environmentally integrated (McCracken and Wallace, 2000a, 2000b;

Garavan, 2007; Mitsakis, 2017). Whilst the SHRD maturity framework developed by Mitsakis, (2017) considers the role of the macro and micro-environment as influencing SHRD, requiring HRD practices to be '*environmentally integrated*', it has certain limitations in explaining HRD value in a crisis context. In developing the SHRD maturity framework, Mitsakis (2017) notes the importance of involving all organisational members to ensure that HRD strategies, plans and processes are environmentally integrated (2017, p290). However, a limitation of the framework is the absence of engagement with external stakeholders such as the regulator. The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* presented in Chapter 7 highlights that the *Regulatory Landscape* played an important role in determining the capabilities that were required in banking post-crisis and therefore were an important stakeholder for HRD to engage with as illustrated by the statement from HRD19 in section 4.2.2, "*for the first time ever, the regulator was going to start scrutinising what frameworks we [HRD] had in place for the top team and the talent pool in the business*". Therefore, I would argue that environmentally integrated HRD requires not just engagement with organisational members but other key stakeholder such as regulators, unions, funding agencies and external subject matter experts. The ability of HRD practitioners to be able to engage with other stakeholders in dynamic contexts is seen as valuable by Garavan et al., (2016).

The changing regulatory landscape required HRD to develop new capabilities within the organisation, whilst at the same time understanding the internal organisational goals as they related to specific crisis stages (micro-environments). I discuss how HRD developed these scanning capabilities to sense changes in environments and then seize and act on these changes in section 8.5.

### 8.3.2 Public enquiries

The role of public enquiries has received limited attention from the CM literature (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, Gephart, 2007); however, the impact of these inquiries was seen as significant by participants within the study, specifically within the BankCo (section 6.7.2). Their impact provides new knowledge on why crises might unfold at a different pace along with impact on issues such as employee engagement. Participant's experiences highlighted that external macro environmental factors such as the capital markets and public inquiries impacted on how quickly an organisation was able to move from the *containment* stage through *recovery* and into *renewal*. Previous research into public enquiries note that they serve two purposes, 'to aid the process of learning and to provide tangible and codified evidence of government responding to a matter of public concern' (Elliott and Macpherson ,2010, p.599). However, the findings provide new understanding of the 'double-edged sword' that came with public enquiries. The early Treasury Select Committees that took place in 2009 saw the chairpersons and CEOs from RBS and HBOS questioned on why the crisis occurred and the role they as senior leaders may have played in its creation. In their analysis of these sessions Whittle and Mueller (2012) observe that the storylines crafted by the bankers was one of being the victim of a financial Tsunami rather than being the instigators of the crisis. The subsequent knock-on effect was one where public opinion of bankers continued to decline (Reputation Institute, 2011). Participants, specifically senior leaders described how they felt they were scapegoated in public enquiries and the subsequent media coverage with a number of the phase 1 senior leaders commenting that their salaries and bonuses had been reported in the public press (section 5.8.1). This had a negative impact on engagement at a time when morale within banking was at a low and required HRD to provide emotional and psychological support often through sourcing external coaches and operate in the *Healer* role that will be described further in section 8.5.7.

### **8.3.3 Articulation of organisational purpose**

The findings support and extend the CM literature by identifying that communication of organisational purpose should be an organisational objective within the *recovery* stage. The study showed that one of the main HRD practices undertaken in the recovery stage was the roll-out of cultural change programmes that communicated purpose and values through the *Renaissance Man* role (sections 5.7 and 6.11). Crises can be seen as an act of betrayal on behalf of the employer, with a knock-on effect on employee engagement Mitroff (2005, p.39). The culture of an organization, the philosophy and vision of its founders, and its foundational values are essential for its survival and revival following a critical event. (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018, p. 22). The study provides new empirical evidence to support the conceptual position of Nizamidou and Vouzas, (2018) that the communication of a new organisational purpose and values can support employee engagement, rebuild trust and develop shared values following a crisis.

### **8.3.4 Summary: Providing new empirical evidence on HRD practices that support organisational crisis management goals**

In this section I have demonstrated how the study contributes empirical evidence for the use of event sequence approaches that identify organisational goals and objectives within each crisis stage (Mitroff, 2005). The study provides a new organisational objective in the *recovery* stage which is the communication of organisational purpose. The role of public enquiries was also identified as an area that has received limited attention from CM theories but should be considered for its impact on the emotional and psychological needs of organisational members and how HRD might respond to these needs. It is important to note that HRD practices post-crisis were not created and delivered in isolation, rather they showed strategic intent by being environmentally integrated. The findings support the view that for HRD to act in a strategic manner requires external, internal, horizontal and vertical

integration (Garavan, 2007; Mitsakis, 2017). To deliver this integration requires HRD to be active in environmental scanning of both macro and micro-environments. The SHRD maturity model developed by Mitsakis (2017) provides a framework for HRD to act strategically post-crisis, however a limitation is the absence of how HRD engages with external stakeholders such as the regulator. Environmentally integrated HRD practices requires HRD to understand CM as discussed earlier in section 8.2. It also requires HRD to develop environmental scanning capabilities such as the ability to sense, seize and act on environmental changes. In the following section I will discuss the third meta contribution, HRD practitioners adopting dynamic HRD roles.

#### **8.4 HRD value was delivered by HRD practitioners adopting dynamic roles and capabilities that scanned environmental changes and leveraged these opportunities to deliver value for the organisation**

Whilst the role of Dynamic Capabilities (DCs) in a crisis context has seen more recent attention especially with the COVID pandemic, DCs, HRD and CM at the time of writing has not been explored. Therefore, this study provides new empirical evidence to support the use of DCs within the context of CM, both as a set of capabilities that HRD should display and in the development of these capabilities throughout the organisation. A further contribution was the generation of new empirical evidence and knowledge that helps understand the specific roles that HRD should adopt at each crisis stage. As noted in chapter 7, using role metaphors can be a useful means by which to describe HRD practices in CM. By providing empirical evidence, the study extends the conceptual work of Hutchins and Wang (2008) who use Watkins (1989) five HRD metaphors to describe HRD's roles relating to CM. It also provides empirical evidence to extend the understanding of the conceptual Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man (MHR) framework developed by Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018). The contribution to the DCs literature will be discussed first, followed by the dynamic HRD roles.

### **8.4.1 Dynamic capabilities**

The study contributes to the DCs literature by providing empirical evidence to demonstrate how HRD can display dynamic capabilities in a post-crisis context. Previous studies have explored the link between HRD and DCs identifying that DCs can provide a competitive advantage (Teece, 2007, Hsu and Wang, 2012). However, much of the research into DCs has taken place in organisations that are going through change because of shifts in external environments such as technology innovations or changes in market conditions (Kareem and Mijbas, 2019). A contribution of this study is that it takes place in a post-crisis context and adds a new contribution to how DCs can apply to CM and addresses the call for more context specific HRD research into DCs from Garavan et al., (2016). The study extends our knowledge of the areas of commonality between CM and the DC literature. Namely, the obvious overlap between the emphasis on sensing changes in environmental conditions and the ability to act on these in a swift manner (Garavan et al., 2016; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003). Furthermore, the findings provide new empirical evidence that extends our knowledge on the DC/HRD literature in a crisis context. Specifically, to deliver against CM goals, HRD must develop DCs within the HRD function and develop and deliver HRD initiatives that develop DCs within the wider organisation. Further commentary on each is provided below.

### **8.4.2 Developing dynamic capabilities within the HRD function**

The findings provide new empirical evidence that extends our understanding of how DCs support HRD value in a post-crisis context. The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* shows that HRD should adopt a dynamic HRD role approach so that it delivers value at each stage of the crisis. To do this, HRD needs to develop and display dynamic capabilities. As noted earlier in section 8.2.3 pre-crisis, HRD did not possess sufficient environmental scanning capabilities. The empirical evidence generated by the study provides new knowledge on how HRD

embarked on a journey of developing these capabilities through practices such as engaging with external stakeholders, developing an understanding of CM practices such as sensemaking, creating decision-making toolkits and using organisational metrics to inform managerial decision-making. The views of CSHRD03 BankCo in section 6.14.2 highlight how the HRD function within the BankCo developed DCs in order to become more effective in sensing environmental changes. This evidence provides new understanding for ways in which HRD should engage in a continual renewal of its capabilities as argued by Garavan et al., (2016, p. 12). In section 8.5.4, I will provide further commentary on how the study provided new empirical evidence that extends our understanding of elements of the conceptual DSHRDC framework by Garavan et al., (2016).

#### **8.4.3 HRD value is demonstrated when HRD develop and deliver initiatives that develop DCs within the wider organisation**

The findings provide new empirical evidence that extends previous research which shows that DCs are influenced by HRD practices and that the presence of DCs influence organisational effectiveness (Kareem and Mijab, 2019). As noted in section 2.6.2 the Kareem and Mijab study was conducted in a non-crisis context (within Iraq universities) and therefore has limited utility in addressing this study's research question. The findings show that organisations represented in this study had developed greater capabilities to be able to sense, seize and act on environmental opportunities through environmentally integrated HRD practices. An example of this being the introduction of an 'agile mindset and methodology' within the BankCo (section 6.15.3). This was in response to concerns that there was still a legacy of the bounded mindset that was known to contribute to the crisis in the first place (Smith and Elliott, 2007). There was an acknowledgement of the increased role of technology within banking and the need to move away from outdated operating models and processes.



This illustrates how HRD sensed the change in both the external (technology advances) and internal environments (bounded mindsets), seized the opportunity through the development of new delivery models and reconfigured by the reallocation of resources, tasks and individuals to ensure that agile practices were adopted and embedded throughout the organisation. The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* shows that the HRD function should continue to develop its own DCs through the *Problem Finder* role so that it can support the organisation to continue to develop capabilities to maintain competitive advantage.

## **8.5 Dynamic HRD roles**

As discussed in chapter 7, the findings identified eight dynamic HRD roles that delivered value at each crisis stage by scanning environmental changes and leveraging these opportunities to deliver value for the organisation. The study extends the application of Watkins (1989) HRD metaphors to crisis management and provides empirical support for elements of the conceptual MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) as a lens to explain these dynamic HRD roles. An eighth role *HRD Voice* was developed, highlighting how in a post-crisis context, regaining creditability with senior stakeholders is a critical requirement for HRD. The extension of Watkins work to CM will be discussed first.

### **8.5.1 Extending Watkins (1989) HRD metaphors to crisis management**

The study extends the conceptual approach of Hutchins and Wang (2008) who used Watkins' (1989) five HRD metaphors to describe HRD's role in CM. The extension of their work is helpful in that it provides empirical evidence for the use of HRD metaphors to describe HRD value in a crisis context. Furthermore, the empirical evidence from the study extends the view that metaphors can be a useful framework to use in describing HRD practices more broadly (Ardichvili, 2001; Gubbins et al., 2012; Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Jang and Ardichvili,

2015, 2020). By adopting a CGT approach, the study demonstrates how new knowledge on HRD value can be enabled by this methodology. The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* goes beyond describing the lived experience of participants. Rather its analyses that experience and uses the lens of metaphor to invoke the value of HRD and its practices in the pursuit of CM goals.

In the following section I discuss how the study extends the use of Watkin's metaphors to describe dynamic HRD roles drawing on the relevant literature.

### **8.5.2 Dynamic HRD role: Change agent**

The findings extend the current HRD literature on change as it applies to a crisis context. HRD acted not just as transformational change agents (Hamlin, 2016) but also delivered value through the ability to promote '*un-learning*' of redundant pre-crisis practices and processes along with the development of '*organisational memory*' to support and embed new post-crisis learning. The study also presents new understanding on the relationship between *HRD Investment* and the success of HRD acting as a *Change Agent*.

#### **8.5.2.1 Unlearning**

The study provides new empirical evidence that extends an understanding of the role of unlearning post-crisis within organisations when top management are not entirely replaced (Starbuck, 2017). The findings showed that whilst there was a significant change in management teams by the *renewal* stage, most organisations still had a number of their top and senior leadership remain. It also extends our understanding of the conceptual *Crisis Management Freeze-Unfreeze Organisational Change model* that was developed by Wang,

(2008). The model explores the relationship between organisational learning throughout the crisis lifecycle. The study shows that this unlearning process was enhanced by HRD practices such as providing support and development for line managers, the use of exercises such as ‘start, stop, continue’, and carrying out retrospective reviews involving a range of stakeholder views. The practices adopted new ways of working and role modelling behaviours consistent with the new culture and ensuring that the organisation’s strategy and goals were considered in a post-crisis context (see section 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 for further examples).

### **8.5.2.2 Organisational memory**

The study provides empirical evidence that extends the conceptual concept of ‘*organisation memory*’ within the *Freeze-Unfreeze Organisational Change model* developed by Wang, (2008). The case study findings highlighted the importance of change programmes that promoted organisational memory so that the lessons of the crisis could be embedded. Lacking organisational memory may not only prevent learning and change from a crisis experience but also affect the ability to provide new knowledge that can help redesign and improve the current crisis management systems (Wang, 2008, p27). A concern of crisis change programmes is that over time, the lessons learnt would be forgotten and non-helpful managerial behaviours would re-emerge. For example, the last of three post-crisis learning stages is ‘forgetfulness’, similar to a lack of organisational memory, in which change is short-lived and lacks impact (Kovoor-Misara and Nathan, 2000). Critically, the design of this study enabled data collection several years after the GFC. As a result, participants were able to give examples of change processes that improved organisational memory and reduced ‘forgetfulness’. However as noted by senior leaders in the BankCo (section 6.10.1), HRD must be able to manage the tension in preserving organisational memory which may be

associated with negative memories whilst ensuring that this does not become a barrier to engagement.

### **8.5.2.3 Change agent enabled by HRD Investment**

The findings provide new critical thinking on the relationship between *HRD Investment* and the ability for HRD to act effectively as a *Change Agent* in a post-crisis context. The BankCo findings showed that organisational wide change programmes remained in place for several years post-crisis. The benefit of the longevity of these programmes was twofold. They provided a mechanism to ensure that the crisis served as a constant reference point. Secondly, through practices such as coaching and line management follow-up, there was a greater emphasis on the embedding of the change agenda throughout the organisation. It is argued that without on-going *HRD Investment*, organisational memory is less likely to be retained.

### **8.5.3 Dynamic HRD Role: Provocateur**

The role of *Provocateur* provides new knowledge and understanding for how HRD can deal with post-crisis behaviours that create barriers to learning and cultural change. This extends Watkins original role descriptor of Empowerer/Meaning maker in new and important ways by including an explicit element of critical reflection as important post-crisis. This addresses the noted tendency for post rationalisations and legitimisation through the lens of the powerful as those in positions of authority and power tend to seek to re-write history to serve their own interests (Kovoor-Misara and Nathan, 2000; Smith and Elliott; 2007) The findings show that HRD challenge was more readily welcomed post-crisis and provides an interesting perspective that crises can be an enabler for HRD to adopt a more challenger approach as illustrated by the views of one of the senior leaders, who shared that HRD had developed

more “bite and backbone” as a result of the crisis (SL19, section 5.4.1) . Two contributions of the *Provocateur* role that developed from the study were the ability to bypass barrier to learning and crisis as an enabler for HRD to challenge within the organisation.

### **8.5.3.1 Bypassing barriers to learning**

A further contribution of the *Provocateur* role is how it supports by-passing barriers to post-crisis learning. The work extends and challenges aspects of the empirical research of Smith and Elliott (2007) who identified several such barriers. Whilst the findings support their views that barriers to learning can include rigidity in beliefs, blame culture and lack of inter-organisational learning, the study challenges their view that disregard for expertise from outsiders is a barrier. The findings showed that participants were positive in the use of external facilitators to help identify issues that caused the crisis and that by using external expertise it can aid in crisis learning. The study provides new empirical evidence to show how innovative delivery methodologies create learning contexts that challenge leadership hubris and ego. These methodologies included externally facilitated workshops where the focus was on supporting leaders to take accountability for their actions (Boin, Stern and Sundelius, 2016). By understanding these barriers, HRD can choose appropriate approaches to deal with defence mechanisms and organisational and cultural issues (Roux-Dufort, 2007). For example, within the BankCo a move away from divisional HRD programmes to group programmes effectively dealt with the barrier of a lack of inter-organisational learning (section 6.12.2).

### **8.5.3.2 Crisis as an enabler for HRD challenge**

As a *Provocateur*, the findings show that crisis can be an enabler for HRD to develop more of a challenger mindset within the organisation. A criticism of HRD pre-crisis was its

inability to challenge the status quo due to such accepted knowledge being viewed as unwelcome (MacKenzie, Garavan and Carbery, 2012). However, the study shows that the crisis created a mandate for change, and effectively provided HRD with a ‘license to operate’ that had not been present pre-crisis. The study provides an example of the more critical skillset required by HRD that Gold and Bratton (2014) identified as essential for addressing issues of power, influence and status. An important enabler for HRD to challenge was identified as the support from the CEO and executive team who generally acted as role models for new behaviour. The role of leadership post-crisis has been under-researched according to Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, (2017), Bhaduri, (2019), Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, (2009). The findings add to this area of interest, by demonstrating the relationship between senior management buy-in and the ability of HRD to challenge. The examples within the BankCo of HRD dealing with ‘wink management’ through engagement with leadership show how this took place (section 6.8.2).

#### **8.5.4 Dynamic HRD Role: Organisational Designer**

The findings supported and built on the original characteristics of the *Organisational Designer* role as defined by Watkins (1989). Two crisis specific characteristics extend the original concept that suggests that HRD can connect the organisation, the structure and the development of employees in the achievement of organisational goals (Watkins, 1989). These two crisis specific characteristics are the firm experience HRD has of pre-crisis structures and strategic partnership with HRM practices.

##### **8.5.4.1 HRD firm experience of pre-crisis structures**

The *Organisational Designer* role as defined by Watkins (1989) has traditionally encouraged

the continuous assessment of the *internal* business environment to understand the development needs and then design and implement structures and programs to support these. The recognition that HRD does not operate in a ‘steady-state’ context especially in a post-crisis context has been a central theme in this study. Therefore, to operate effectively as organisational designers, HRD must continue to develop dynamic capabilities that scan both the internal and external environments. The findings provide empirical support for Zagelmeyer and Gollan, (2012), who argued that HR and by extension HRD is best placed to understand the weakness of pre-crisis structures and processes. An example of how this applied within the study was the way in which HRD designed tools to support new organisational processes recommended by the regulator. These recommendations called for the removal of structures and processes that allowed siloed decision-making with limited accountability. Within BankCo, participants shared how the introduction of a decision-making toolkit required business decisions to be made against a set of criteria that reflected the organisations stated values (section 6.15.2). This organisation was still using the toolkit several years after the crisis with the belief that it was one of the most effective ways in which behaviours and cultural were changed post-crisis. This example also illustrates how HRD was able to use their knowledge of the limitations of prior structures to create structures and processes that demonstrated to the regulator that the organisation was undertaking the required structural and cultural changes.

The study provides empirical evidence that extends the importance of social capital and networks of HRD practitioners to a crisis context if they are to understand stakeholder requirements and help make strategically informed decisions, (Gubbins and Garavan, 2009). As noted in sections 5.8.1 and 5.8.2, post-crisis there was significant change within

management teams. The retention of key HRD practitioners to provide firm specific context to these new teams was seen as valuable and adds an interesting dimension to the firm experience and HRD debate as it applies to a post-crisis context. Furthermore, the role that many HRD practitioners played of “*part counsellor, part therapist, part coach*” (HRD07, section 5.3.2) was based on building up social capital with senior leaders so they felt safe during vulnerable times.

#### **8.5.4.2 HRD strategic partnership with HRM practices**

Distinguishing between HRM and HRD can at times be problematic, especially in a post-crisis context as illustrated by the field research of Mitsakis, (2017). His research showed that a clear partnership between the two was not evident with the general conclusion that both sets of practices are delivered under the umbrella of general HR practices (2017, p.298).

Additionally, employee perceptions on the area of strategic partnership with HRM tended to focus on the intensity and subject of training provided as the two dimensions on which employees measured the HRD/HRM partnership. In contrast, this study highlights that HRD was in fact able to demonstrate a clear strategic partnership with HRM. Two factors that contributed to this were centralisation and *HRD Investment*. The centralisation that applied across many of the organisations represented in this study resulted in an elevation of the HRD function through the establishment of Centres of Excellence. These CoE’s provided a clear delineation of roles/responsibilities from more general HR practices. They were responsible for the design and implementation of group wide HRD practices in response to the fragmented, siloed and often reactionary HRD programs that were a feature of the containment stage. The CoE’s further cemented HRD identity and legitimacy, and as one HRD professional suggested (HRD10, section 5.8.2), allowed them to build their own brand, distinct from HR. For example, HR were the implementors for cost-reduction programs that



often resulted in significant change in personnel and operating procedures. HRD, was able to align with these programs by providing support to line managers in how to deal with challenging conversations, developing change toolkits and resources around resilience, thereby focusing on the development requirements.

*HRD Investment* explains how together HRD and HRM were able to secure on-going investment for HRD practices whilst at the same time providing evidence of the impact of HRM practices to the wider business. As noted in section 5.8.1, this was through the sharing of organisational metrics that touched on areas such as performance, reward, leadership, engagement and development. This strategic alignment shows HRD maturity in working with the broader HR function and extends the understanding of how evidence based HRD can be applied in crisis context through the use of organisational data to make informed business decisions (Gubbins et al., 2018). By considering the impact of all aspects of HR practices, both HRD and HRM were able to communicate on a more strategic level and address the criticism raised at them in the early stage of the crisis that they were simply operating in a reactionary mode. In operating as an organisational designer, there was evidence that HRD worked effectively with their HRM colleagues to drive greater alignment in the post-crisis context.

### **8.5.5 Dynamic HRD Role: Problem Finder**

The findings extend the original problem-solver role as defined by Watkins (1989) to one where HRD post-crisis is proactive in being able to sense, seize and act on environmental changes rather than operate with more of a short-term reactionary mindset. The study also provides empirical evidence to support the conceptual view from (Hutchins and Wang, 2008) that HRD practitioners can best serve organisational CM goals by moving from a problem-

solving approach to one of problem-finding. The study provides new crisis specific capabilities of HRD practitioners to perform the *Problem Finder* role. These are the presence and maturity of dynamic capabilities that allow HRD practitioners to be able to sense, seize and act on threats and opportunities presented by the external and internal environment.

#### **8.5.5.1 Maturity of dynamic capabilities**

The findings provide empirical evidence that extends the role of DCs within HRD and specifically the part they can play post-crisis. The study demonstrates that as a *Problem Finder*, HRD displayed a maturing of DCs. As a *Problem Finder*, HRD adopted a role where they were not simply responding to organisational problems but one in which they led on early signal detection of what these problems might be (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003). The CM literature is clear on the requirement that post-crisis organisations remain pro-active in how they scan environmental changes (both internal and external) and consistently apply this learning (Mitroff, 2005; Roux-Dufort, 2007). The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* presented in this study (see Figure 7.1, section 7.1) illustrates how HRD supported in designing and implementing environmentally integrated HRD strategies, plans and policies that supported the organisational objectives throughout each crisis stage. Whilst the development of organisational memory as part of the *Change Agent* role ensured that the GFC served as a reference point for organisational learning, the study provides empirical evidence to support the suggestion by Garavan et al., (2016) that HRD should continually scan external and internal environments to take advantage of environmental opportunities.

An example of how HRD demonstrated maturing of DCs was seen in the BankCo with the '*Outside In*' initiative (section 6.14.1) where the HRD function built a set of learning practices around the concept of looking outside the bank as a result of changes in the external

environment. The purpose was to raise awareness of innovation and new ways of working from other industries such as technology, sport and retail. This was driven by the need to become more customer-centric in the services that were offered through banking and learn from others in relation to best in-class service approaches and how to leverage technology effectively.

### **8.5.6 Dynamic HRD Role: Dynamic Capability Developer**

The findings identified that HRD value is demonstrated when it adopts a *Dynamic Capability Developer* (DCD) role. This role builds on the requirement for HRD to develop human capital capabilities as suggested by Watkins (1989) and extends this requirement to a post-crisis context. Specifically, the findings identified that HRD's ability to develop individual and organisation capabilities that were able to sense, seize and reconfigure to changes in both the macro and micro-environments (Garavan et al., 2016). The DCD role provides further empirical evidence to the literature that focuses on HRD's role in developing CM capabilities (Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer, 2014; Hutchins and Wang, 2008). It also extends the discussion by identifying specific HRD practices that developed dynamic capabilities. These were largely aligned with both the CM sense-making and learning in crisis (LIC) approaches.

#### **8.5.6.1 Sensemaking**

As discussed in section 2.7.10, sensemaking is primarily concerned with becoming aware of signs that are at variance with the norm, anomalies with the system that interrupt the pattern, (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). Sense-making occurs when people actively notice and select cues and relate these to broader frames of reference (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003). The findings showed culturally there was a 'reluctance to simplify assumptions about the world' with participants believing that there were a new set of behaviours in place which welcomed

diverse opinions and developed a healthy scepticism towards perceived wisdom (Weick and Sutcliffe 2003). An example of this was seen in the curriculum that formed part of the ongoing leadership development program within the BankCo. Sections 6.15.1 and 6.15.2 identified toolkits and embedding practices that encouraged real-time feedback and coaching which were seen by participants as evidence that the focus was on developing a set of skills that supported the organisation in being able to spot, interpret and pursue opportunities within the environment (Garavan et al., 2016). There was a belief that post-crisis there was greater autonomy for change and innovation at a business unit level, which participants believed gave them greater competitive advantage over rivals.

#### **8.5.6.2 Learning in Crisis (LiC)**

The findings provide empirical evidence to support the conceptual model of LiC that seeks to develop the relationship between learning and CM as developed by Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer (2014). LiC incorporates both experimentation and improvisation to develop a wider range of learning practices which was consistent with the findings where participants shared of innovative delivery methods being deployed such as sports coaching, daily stand-ups, e-learning and team effectiveness programmes (section 5.11.1). Senior leader participants shared how HRD initiatives provided not only the tools to be able to identify emergent opportunities and threats but also processes that ensured that there was more of an emphasis on the ability to question and challenge managerial decision-making compared to pre-crisis behaviours.

### **8.5.7 Contribution to Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018) Mentor-Healer-Renaissance Man (MHR) Framework**

The findings extend the conceptual MHR framework by providing empirical evidence to support the roles of *Healer* and *Renaissance Man*. Earlier in section 8.2.1, I identified that HRD did not have a good enough knowledge of CM and therefore was unable to act in the mentor role as described in their framework. The MHR model attempts to provide a new conceptual perspective on how HRD can support CM and draws on the utility of using metaphors to describe HRD roles (Kuchinke, 2001; Short 2000).

#### **8.5.7.1 Dynamic HRD Role: Healer**

A contribution of this study is that it provides empirical evidence for how HRD can effectively operate as a *Healer* post-crisis. Crises can create emotional reactions such as loss, shock, and denial (Mitroff, 2005; Roux Dufort, 2007; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018) and lead to a collapse in an individual's paradigm for sense-making (Weick, 1995). The findings showed that HRD should possess the necessary skills and have access to the appropriate resources to support in the rebuilding of trust, engagement and emotional resiliency that can accompany crisis events.

#### **8.5.7.2 Re-establishment of trust**

Re-establishment of employee trust in senior leadership was delivered through a comprehensive set of communication events. The findings add a new contribution to the literature on crisis communication (Reilly, 2008) by highlighting the role of environmental scanning as part of the crisis communication process. An example of this was shared from the BankCo in section 6.7.3 where HRD acted on the data it was receiving from those who were dealing with distressed businesses. These were often difficult interactions that drew on

intense emotional and psychological resources from those involved. Through HRD support of senior leaders who were leading these business units it became apparent that there was a disconnect between the customer and the bank. This resulted in a set of customer-facing practices for senior management to promote greater awareness and transparency as well as providing ongoing coaching and emotional support to staff who were responsible for these projects.

### **8.5.7.3 Developing engagement through storytelling**

A contribution of the study is further empirical evidence for storytelling as a mechanism to provide context and elicit feedback from employees post-crisis and extending its value to create engagement (Eray, 2018; Kopp et al., 2011). The macro environment of the *Regulatory Landscape* was one of intense public scrutiny which created an internal environment where engagement was severely impacted with particular risk around talent retention. Section 5.3.1 shows how senior leaders spoke about the benefit they got from HRD facilitated sessions where the agenda was simply to create space for leaders to talk and share about their experiences of the GFC. BankCo participants described the use of storytelling as a way to allow “*shared experience and meaning of what we were all going through*” (CSFG14) to occur in open forums.

### **8.5.7.4 Supporting emotional and psychological impact**

The findings show that HRD is uniquely placed to support individuals in processing the emotional impact of crisis at an individual, team, and organisational level. Whilst individuals can survive crisis, and some may even emerge stronger through a crisis experience, if they are mentally and physically prepared, others may require additional support (Nizamidou and

Vouzas, 2018, p.21). This support moves beyond the transactional business partnering role as suggested by others such as Ulrich and Brockbank, (2005), into the place where HRD practitioners can access appropriate expertise through external partners to provide more robust psychological support to deal with intense negative emotions (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). Within the BankCo, CSHRD06 described how he had been tasked with developing a panel of external coaches to provide emotional and psychological support for senior leaders as noted in sections 6.2.3 and 6.7.2.

#### **8.5.7.5 Dynamic HRD Role: Renaissance Man**

The findings extend the theoretical model of Nizamidou and Vouzas, (2018) by evidencing the HRD practices that support the *Renaissance Man* role. The study provides fresh insights as to how new organisational values were articulated and embedded throughout the organisation. Within the BankCo, the development of an organisational purpose was seen as a pivot point by those in the focus groups (section 6.11.1) as a means of rebuilding engagement in the organisation with a new forward-facing agenda. HRD designed and delivered organisational wide culture programmes that communicated new Purpose, Vision and Values that involved the use of culture champions, line managers and senior leadership as role models. The *Renaissance Man* role provides further empirical evidence that extends the findings from Mistakis (2017) that a component of SHRD maturity is the circulation of organisational cultural values across all departments promotes cultural transition to a post-crisis context.

#### **8.5.7.6 Ability to influence culture**

The study challenges previous empirical studies that have found that HRD's ability to shape and influence corporate culture and climate was stronger pre-crisis (Keeble-Ramsay and

Armitage, 2015, Mitsakis, 2017). The timing of this study which took place in the latter stages of the *renewal* stage contributes new knowledge and more compelling evidence than that of Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage's research which took place in the containment stage of the GFC. However, Mitsakis' (2017) research was conducted a number of years later than that of Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage but also shows that the perception of HRD's value in shaping organisational culture was weak in the post-crisis context. His findings also show that HRD did not have a strong voice post-crisis with limited ability to influence key stakeholders. Whereas this study found that by operating as a *Renaissance Man*, HRD was able to leverage a strengthening of the *HRD Voice* as relationships with senior management and line managers improved. For example, within the BankCo, it was acknowledged that the impact of the roll-out of a new purpose, values and culture programme would be more successful if it was seen to be role modelled by the CEO and executive team (section 6.11.1). In agreement with the HRD executive it was agreed to video and share throughout the BankCo sections of their engagement with the programme as evidence of commitment to change by the senior management. There were other examples from HRD participants of senior leaders acting as sponsors for programmes and being actively engaged in programme delivery, by mentoring, hosting discussions and acting as positive role models.

The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* contains an additional role (*HRD Voice*) that describes how HRD re-established credibility and influence with key stakeholders in the post-crisis context. I will discuss this role in the following section.

### **8.5.8 Dynamic HRD Role: HRD Voice**

The findings provide empirical evidence that adds to the debate on whether HRD can play a strategic role through the extent to which it has a voice in the development of an organisations strategic outlook (Garavan, 2007, Holbeche, 2009, Mitsakis, 2014b.) Their



work emphasises the importance of HRD executives playing an active role in stakeholder management and business partnering but hasn't considered the impact of a post-crisis context. The findings show that leadership plays a crucial role in elevating *HRD Voice* in a post-crisis context and addresses the call for more empirical studies to understand how HRD and leadership can work more effectively together in a post-crisis context (Bowers, Hall and Srinivasan, 2017; Bhaduri, 2019). The theory developed shows how and why *HRD Voice* in the BankCo was elevated in the renewal stage compared to pre-crisis. As noted in section 8.2.3, when HRD is regarded solely as a training provider, it limits the ability to influence at a strategic level (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009). However, the findings show that having a greater understanding of CM goals and aligning them with HRD practices, policies and processes elevated HRD from being perceived as a training provider to a strategic partner.

The study also shows how HRD credibility can be impacted post-crisis and specific practices HRD can undertake to re-establish a stronger voice with key stakeholders. The findings identified the reestablishing of stakeholder relations and the use of external resources as important practices associated with *HRD Voice*.

#### **8.5.8.1 Rebuilding stakeholder relationships**

The findings showed that HRD went about a proactive process that involved re-forming stakeholder relationships. This provides empirical evidence to support the theoretical suggestion that HRD should “coevolve, recalibrate and reconceptualise relationships” (Garavan et al., 2016, p.7) as a component for developing dynamic capabilities. The findings provide further empirical evidence to support the SHRD maturity model that emphasises the

importance of HRD practitioners working closely with senior management at a strategic level in a post-crisis context Mitsakis (2017).

The study provides further empirical evidence for the need for HRD to identify and build strong relationships with those who can support the strategic objectives of HRD (Watson and Maxwell, 2007; Garavan, 2007). These authors argue that senior management's beliefs about HRD affects its role, reputation, and creditability since this stakeholder group allocates resources, creates strategic priorities and makes investment decisions that impact HRD practices. The findings provide new insights as to how the perceptions of leaders regarding HRD value can change over the post-crisis period. The findings from senior leader participants observed that HRD had a limited role in strategic matters during the *containment* stage. It was only in the *recovery* and *renewal* stages where *HRD Voice* was significantly strengthened that HRD was able to exert influence at the organisational strategic level. The example of SL15 (section 5.11.1), a Chief Risk Officer illustrates how a leader could be vocal on the shortcomings of HRD at the beginning of the crisis, but then provided examples of how HRD practices were supporting them in delivering against organisational goals. The examples from the BankCo also highlights the importance of the CEO's attitude towards development as a key enabler for *HRD Voice* post-crisis.

#### **8.5.8.2 Developing absorptive capacity and knowledge integration**

This study provides new empirical evidence that highlights the importance of HRD developing absorptive capacity and knowledge integration in a post-crisis context. Absorptive capacity involves accessing external knowledge and integrating that knowledge throughout the organisation and as noted in section 2.6.6 consists of three dimensions (1) recognising

external knowledge value (2) applying knowledge for transformation (3) embedding of new knowledge into everyday practices (Tehrani, 2013). The three dimensions of absorptive capacity were seen throughout the post-crisis period and provide empirical evidence to support the theoretical suggestion from Garavan et al., 2016 that HRD develop this capacity firstly within their own ranks before they can effectively lead the rest of the organisation. By bringing in external subject matter experts from external learning partners HRD recognised its own lack of knowledge of CM. The *'learning from crisis'* literature highlights the need to move from a bounded mindset to one where new knowledge is imparted to the organisation to stimulate change (Smith and Elliott, 2007, Wang, 2008). By using external subject matter experts from business schools and learning consultancies, HRD opened the organisation up to the value of external knowledge. The value of these learning experiences that were initially targeted at senior management resulted in a gradual amplification of *HRD Voice*. Secondly, applying knowledge for transformation requires the ability of the HRD function to undergo change and transformation itself whilst also leading the organisation through transformation. This is demonstrated by HRD adopting the eight dynamic HRD roles showing its capability to take the new learning about CM and assimilate this into new roles. Finally, the embedding of new knowledge into daily routines ensures that the value of external knowledge is realised within organisational practices

### **8.5.9 Summary: Dynamic HRD roles**

The findings extend the use of DCs within CM and show the value of HRD developing sensing, seizing and re-configuring capabilities as part of their CM responses. New knowledge generated from the study shows the ways in which HRD can be more effective in environmental scanning at each crisis stage. Furthermore, the study shows specific HRD initiatives that develop DCs at an individual and organisational level. The findings extend our

understanding of the dynamic nature of crises and the requirement for HRD to adopt dynamic roles to deliver against organisational goals. The research design and approach extends the use of metaphor to understand HRD value in a crisis context, in doing so, it provided empirical evidence to support the previous conceptual approaches of Hutchins (2008) and Nizamidou and Vouzas (2018). The findings developed a new crisis specific metaphor, *HRD Voice* that helps understand the importance of executive sponsorship and stakeholder management for HRD practices within the crisis context.

## **8.6 Conclusion of theoretical contributions**

In this chapter I have presented three meta contributions to the debate on how organisational stakeholders explain HRD value in a post-crisis context. Contribution one provides new empirical evidence that extends our understanding of the importance of HRD understanding its role in CM and the negative impact this can have on HRD value when a crisis occurs. It identifies reasons why HRD did not possess an appropriate grasp of CM practices such as the perception from HRD that such practices had limited applicability into the banking sector. Contribution two presents new knowledge into specific HRD practices that need to be delivered at each crisis stage. It provides new understanding on the role of macro environmental factors such as the *Regulatory Landscape* in shaping HRD activity. The re-definition of an organisational purpose and values as part of cultural change presents new knowledge on the role that HRD can play in helping to shape organisational culture. The findings extend the SHRD literature, showing how environmental scanning supports organisational goals at each crisis stage. The final contribution provides new knowledge and understanding as to how HRD delivers value through the development of DCs and adopting specific dynamic HRD roles within each stage of the crisis event sequence. It provides

empirical evidence that extends previous conceptual approaches that use metaphors to explain HRD Value in a post-crisis context.

In the final concluding chapter, I will draw together the research and practical applications of the findings as well as addressing the methodological strengths and limitations of the study along with recommendations for future research.

## 9 Chapter 9 Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I identified through the presentation of three meta contributions how the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* addressed the research question of explaining stakeholder perceptions of HRD value and provides an important contribution to the on-going debate on the nature of HRD value. By means of a brief recap, these three meta contributions were firstly, identifying the value in HRD becoming conversant with crisis management (CM) models and using that insight to act as a strategic partner within the crisis process. Secondly, armed with this knowledge, HRD can design, deliver, and evaluate HRD interventions that support organisational objectives at each stage in the crisis journey. Thirdly, HRD value is demonstrated by the HRD function adopting dynamic HRD roles and capabilities that scan environmental changes and leverage these opportunities to deliver value to the organisation. The findings provide a robust model that extends our understanding of stakeholder requirements in a crisis context and the specific HRD roles and practices that are perceived as adding value.

This chapter will identify how these contributions provide further substantive research areas for the '*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*' to be examined including investigating how the theory is generalisable against different crisis types, industries and geographies. Secondly it considers the implication for practice as crises continue to become the new normal at both a local and global level. Third, it highlights how the methodology adopted in this thesis contributes to the use of grounded theory in HRD research and finally provides some personal reflections and concluding thoughts.

## 9.1 Implications for research

This study serves as a prompt for organisational studies (OS) scholars to consider further the importance of developing knowledge and understanding of HRDs' role in CM. As noted in chapter 1, a motivation for this study was the view from Hutchins (2008) that such understanding was lacking within the HRD academic and practitioner community, and that CM provides an area of rich opportunities for HRD scholars (Wang, 2019). The work of Mitsakis (2017) and Garavan et al., (2016) show that interest in explaining HRD in dynamic contexts is growing, however empirical research is still lacking. The thesis provides important contributions on which to build. I focus here on three implications; the first is to encourage a critical examination of HRD value and how it might differ in 'steady state' contexts compared to a dynamic context such as crisis; the second is to connect areas of research between CM and HRD and the third is to look at potentially new research agendas.

A contribution of this study has been the importance of context when considering HRD value (Torraco, 2004), specifically how it impacts stakeholder perceptions of HRD value. Crises create a unique set of external and internal environments in which HRD practitioners need to understand and align their practices. I have identified that environmental scanning models (Mitsakis, 2017) and Garavan et al., (2016), provide a more useful means by which to examine HRD value given the emphasis they place on external and internal integration between HRD practices and environmental conditions. The nature of HRD value is still debated amongst academics and given the complexity of a crisis context and range of relevant HRD practices, I have shown that the use of HRD role metaphors (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018; Watkins, 1989) provides a lens by which researchers might be better able to understand HRD value. The study shows that stakeholder's requirements in times of crisis are different to those in more 'steady state'

context, including dealing with the emotional and psychological impact of a crisis (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018), navigating issues of blame and scape-goating (Smith and Elliott, 2007), demonstrating credibility (Aldrich et al., 2015; Gubbins et al., 2018) and management aligning strategies around specific crisis management goals (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019; Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009).

The study contributes to those HRD scholars (Hutchins, 2008; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009; Wang, 2019; Zulkarnaini et al., 2019) who have argued that there should be more research that connects HRD and CM. The study shows that adopting an event-based sequence approach theoretical framework (Mitroff, 2005) from the CM literature is helpful in determining specifics of HRD value. Furthermore, using an event-based sequence approach allows both HRD and CM researchers to be able to investigate the speed and impact of event, HRD response strategies and the nature and duration of event consequences (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, p.220). It allows researchers to understand the ‘signal detection to renewal’ crisis process, and in turn predict the probability of a crisis occurring and plan more effectively for how to manage its impact (Pearson and Mitroff, 2019).

There are also new areas of research which this thesis can provide a framework for. The *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* provides a useful opportunity to examine how the theory is generalisable across other crisis types, industries and geographical locations. At the time of writing the COVID pandemic has re-ignited interest in how human capital is managed and developed in a crisis context (Diriani et al., 2020) and I would offer that the theory developed in this study is a useful framework to build understanding on HRDs’ value in the COVID



pandemic. More broadly, researchers should look at different types of crisis and their impact on HRD. This study has examined a man-made disaster which has followed an event-based sequence of crisis stages. However other crises such as climate change or the energy crisis are different in nature with less distinct stages. Areas of interest to researchers should include to what extent a man-made disaster such as the GFC differs from that of a global health crisis and what impact this has on contextual factors such as dealing with external bodies, i.e. health agencies, managing the emotional impact of loss of life/illness and the greater or lesser extent of the presence of defence mechanisms from leaders such as blame and scapegoating. Research should also focus on dynamic HRD roles and how these might differ depending on the nature and type of crisis. For example, within this study, re-defining organisational purpose and values through the *Renaissance Man* role was specific to Banking adopting a more ethical mindset (Martin and Gollan, 2012). Understanding whether this role and others are required in crisis events such as natural disasters, health crises or broader social/environmental crises is an area where further research can extend our knowledge and understanding of HRD value in CM.

The study has also identified the importance of HRD practitioners developing dynamic capabilities. DCs within the study explain how HRD was able to scan changes in the external and internal environments and adapt accordingly. Further research should explore the role of DCs in a crisis context (Garavan et al., 2016). Specific areas of interest highlighted in this study that warrant further investigation are the antecedents, characteristics and processes that support the organisational HRD team to develop DCs within its own membership and in turn how DCs support CM organisational goals within specific crisis stages.

The dynamic HRD post-crisis theory could also be integrated with the SHRD maturity framework (Mitsakis, 2017) to identify specific dynamic roles that support components of the framework. This would extend our understanding of the criteria for SHRD maturity as it applies to crisis stages. Specifically, within the framework, Mitsakis (2017) identifies the extensive role of HRD executives, identifying roles such as change agents, consultants and learning facilitators as indicators of SHRD maturity. The theory generated in this study provides further dynamic roles that can demonstrate SHRD maturity. An outcome of integrating both theoretical frameworks would be to create a comprehensive set of criteria for SHRD maturity within dynamic contexts such as crisis.

The study provides important knowledge and understanding as to the degree to which HRD can have a voice in the development of the organisational strategy (Garavan, 2007, Holbeche, 2009, Mitsakis, 2014b, Mitsakis, 2017). When HRD operates purely as a training provider as identified by participants in the BankCo, its voice is diminished. The '*dynamic HRD post-crisis theory*' shows that crisis can be an enabler for *HRD Voice* to become elevated within an organisation. Future research can focus on investigating the conditions and antecedents of HRD Voice in a crisis context and the role of CM knowledge within the HRD team as an enabler to building HRD influence.

A further area of research which would be useful to explore is to investigate other factors that contribute to or impede HRD value. The study identified that the requirements of the regulator contributed to HRD value, with HRD having to align their practices, processes and plans to demonstrate cultural change post-crisis. Future research could focus on what other

contextual factors influence HRD value in a crisis and extend our understanding of the role of context in HRD (Garavan et al., 2019).

## **9.2 Implications for research**

From an HRD practice perspective this study provides several new insights into the role of HRD in a crisis context. By including both the views of HRD practitioners and organisational stakeholders in the study, a detailed understanding is provided of specific competencies, skills and roles and areas where HRD practitioners should focus their own training and development needs and is a key contribution on a practical level. This should include HRD practitioners undertaking training in CM principles and practices and then applying this learning to the organisation. This should include facilitating crisis training and scenario planning for the organisation and talent development crisis plans (Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009). As part of crisis preparation, HRD should put in place cross-functional learning crisis units (Chebbi and Pundrich, 2015) so that in the event of a crisis, functions such as communications, HR, IT and senior leadership are appropriately trained in roles and responsibilities. By undergoing training in CM, HRD will be able to act strategically in aligning HRD practices and policies with organisational CM goals at each stage of the crisis. Critically, the study extends our understanding of the technical and professional knowledge that stakeholders expect HRD practitioners to possess (Gubbins et al., 2018) to include CM.

Whilst the above are practices that HRD can undertake to prevent and manage a crisis, more recent macro developments have shown that organisations face multiple crises that are often over-lapping and may consist of different stages. At the time of writing UK and Irish organisations are dealing with the legacy of COVID, along with the impact of an energy crisis. This has implications for how HRD practitioners might manage their responsibilities in

supporting organisational CM goals in dynamic contexts. Whilst the crisis definition used in this thesis refers to crises as being ‘sudden and unexpected’ (Coombs, 2007), most crises develop over time which Mitroff (2005) refers to as the signal detection period. If left unchecked, this period is characterised by the slow build-up of errors which management ignore due to limited sense-making capabilities (Weick, 1995), or the development of a bounded-mindset (Smith and Elliott, 2007). A key practical implication of this study is the need for HRD practitioners to be active in environmental scanning. The use of PESTLE and SWOT frameworks, along with the use of HR/D metrics such as leadership surveys (Mitsakis, 2017) can help develop proactive HRD practices which may not prevent certain types of crisis from occurring but will ensure that the organisation is effectively prepared to deal with these when they arise.

For heavily regulated industries such as banking, it is important the HR function and by extension HRD has a robust understanding of how to apply regulation to HR policies and practices (Aldrich et al., 2015). HRD practitioners should continue to undertake such training to ensure that external environmental conditions are represented in internal HRD practices. As shown in the BankCo findings (section 6.2.1), HRD should continue to have a thorough business understanding and could benefit from recruiting into its ranks from other business functions. Further consideration could be given to the use of HRD role rotation for organisations such as the BankCo that had high retention rates within its HRD team, to ensure that they develop better business understanding. The value of firm knowledge within the organisational HRD team also has an implication for the post-crisis context. Knowledge of systems and processes that contributed to the crisis can be an enabler for dealing more effectively with known barriers to learning (Zagelmeyer and Gollan, 2012). Firm knowledge can also play a role in the crisis change agenda in helping to ‘unlearn’ unhelpful pre-crisis

behaviours through practices such as conducting retrospective reviews, ‘start, stop, continue’ exercises and active learning.

Competent use of data and key HR/D metrics during a crisis is seen as a value-add practice in supporting strategic decision-making, providing evidence to external stakeholders such as the regulator and providing a compelling case for ongoing investment into HRD practices. In managing stakeholder perceptions of HRD, practitioners should continue to develop their skills in using organisational data to build more effective business partner relationships (Gubbins et al., 2018). This has implications for design, delivery and evaluation processes that allow for data to be collected at the individual, team and organisational level.

HRD practitioners should develop their own dynamic capabilities to be able to sense, seize and act on changes within the external and internal environments (Garavan et al., 2016). Crisis are known to occur when organisations adopt a ‘bounded mindset’ and develops a reluctance to embrace the views of outsiders (Smith and Elliott, 2007). The organisational HRD team should continually evaluate ways in which it builds principles such as sense-making and reflexive practice into its own practise and that of the wider organisation (Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer, 2014). Bringing outside perspectives in through partnerships with business schools and consultancies can develop more critical reflection on organisational behaviour (Gold and Bratton, 2014) and develop what the DCs literature refers to as absorptive capacity and knowledge integration (Tehrani, 2013).

To deal with the emotional, psychological and physiological impact of crisis, HRD practitioners should develop skills in being able to recognise these symptoms within the

organisation and work with HR in the development of well-being and resilience programmes. The example from the BankCo in dealing with the distressed business unit (section 6.7.3) shows the importance of establishing formal frameworks post-crisis to deal with the negative impact of a crisis. HRD practitioners could also benefit from gaining professional qualifications in areas such as coaching and counselling and develop a panel of external coaches and therapists to provide appropriate support following a crisis. Consideration needs to be given to how HRD practitioners themselves are also supported to deal with the impact of a crisis, with a requirement for HRD provision for HRD to be accounted for.

The study shows that the GFC became an enabler for HRD to develop a stronger voice within the organisation and provide more challenge to unhelpful management behaviours. If HR is invited by senior management to become the ‘guardians of conscience’ of an organization’s culture (Zagelmeyer and Gollan, 2012, p.311) then consideration needs to be given to how HRD approaches issues around ethical decision-making. The findings show that the development of decision-making toolkits that align with organisational purpose and values can help create greater transparency in value based managerial decision-making.

### **9.3 Methodological strengths and limitations**

From a methodological perspective this thesis contributes to understanding how grounded theory approaches can support in theory elaboration and extension on extant theories within HRD research (Devadas, Silong and Ismail, 2011) and addresses the call for more HR related research that adopts a grounded theory approach (Murphy, Klotz and Kreiner, 2017) as noted in section 3.2. The approach taken in this study allowed for new theory to be developed through an iterative process analysing the data and several existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks to guide my reasoning. These included the SHRD maturity framework (Mitsakis,

2017), DSHRDC framework (Garavan et al., 2016), HRD roles (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Watkins, 1989) and the MHR framework (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). In determining the quality of grounded theory research, a variety of criteria has been suggested based on the different features used by grounded theorists (Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). Within the constructivist grounded theory approach used in this study Charmaz (2014) suggests four criteria for assessing grounded theory; creditability, originality, resonance and usefulness and these serve as a useful lens in which to consider the methodological strengths and limitations of the study.

Credibility considers having sufficient data, making systematic comparisons, and developing a thorough analysis throughout the research process. In chapter 3, I outlined my research approach, detailing my rationale for the decisions I made and how I approached data analysis. The sample size of 65 interviews and 2 focus groups allowed me to ensure that I had adequate theoretical saturation as by the stage of the final interviews no new data or categories were developed. A strength of the sample group was understanding the views of senior executives given previous researchers challenges in engaging with this set of stakeholders (Mitsakis, 2017). Having HR/D participants take part also allowed their views to be part of the final theory given the call for more HRD research from amongst its own ranks (Anderson, 2009). Including HR/D perspectives created a better understanding of what roles HRD practitioners felt they added value and areas where they felt they lacked the necessary skills or competencies. Their inclusion allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of HRD value from a wider range of stakeholders in comparison to other studies which have had a narrower focus on management and employee perceptions such as those conducted by Alagaraja, (2013) and Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage, (2015). The complexity and longevity of the post-crisis period required a range of HRD practices, and the inclusion of HR/D

practitioners helped explain the impact of mandatory compliance training on the HRD team and the impact that such training might have on broader developmental activities particularly with middle management and front-line staff (see section 6.9 and the views of CSFG17). HR/D views were helpful in providing a more thorough understanding of barriers to learning and the tools and processes adopted by HRD to support crisis learning and the power dynamics that exist post-crisis (Smith and Elliott, 2007). A further benefit was understanding the requirements between HR and HRD stakeholders and how HRD practices were integrated with broader HRM activities such as performance management, reward and recruitment as demonstrated by the *Organisational Designer* role in section 5.8.1. By including HR/D views, the study was able to better understand the conditions, tools and processes which impact HRD value.

The inclusion of the BankCo case study also supports the creditability of the study. As noted in Table 6.1 in section 6.0, the BankCo findings allowed for further understanding and knowledge to be developed relating to phase 1 themes. Having a constant organisational context to examine more in-depth specific themes is a key contribution of this study. For example, the findings provided understanding of the importance of HRD possessing technical and professional knowledge including CM, and the knock-on effect on HRD creditability when this knowledge was lacking (Aldrich et al., 2015; Gubbins et al., 2018). It also describes the process by which HRD regained creditability through the development of key relationships, the use of metrics to inform business decisions and the ability to deliver a range of value-add dynamic roles.



A limitation of the study was the inability to secure the views of non-executive directors as the views of this set of stakeholders would provide different perspectives on HRD value. The sample was from two specific locations (UK and Ireland) which have very similar approaches to regulation and impacts of the GFC and may not be generalisable to other geographies or indeed other industries. Whilst I attempted to secure a second Irish based case study, this was ultimately unsuccessful within the timeframe of a PhD study and is a limitation of the study.

Credibility also involves the researcher's views and actions and places a strong emphasis on reflexivity throughout the research process (Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). In adopting a constructivist approach, I recognised the role I played as a researcher in the research process and final theory development. Throughout this thesis I have shared how the origins of the study developed from my own role as a practitioner and provided examples of reflexive memos in section 3.9.1.2. that encourage what Charmaz and Thornberg (2021) note as allowing the reader 'openness to scrutinizing who the researcher is.' (p.316).

Originality relates to whether a study offers new insights or provides fresh conceptualisations of a recognised problem and establishes the significance of the analysis (Charmaz, 2014).

This study provides new empirical evidence on HRD value in a post-crisis context developed from a range of stakeholder perceptions. If organisations are to experience increasing times of turbulence (Garavan et al., 2016), then the theory developed provides important knowledge and understanding for both HRD academics and practitioners on how HRD delivers value in such contexts.

Resonance is achieved when researchers align and modify their data gathering strategies to illuminate participants experiences. An example of this was in early interviews where the category of *Regulatory Landscape* developed, resulting in recruiting risk participants who could speak directly to that theme and revising my interview guide to account for categories as they developed in the data. It allowed me to listen to responses from a new standpoint when considering the demands the regulator placed on individuals and how this might impact their view of HRD value.

Usefulness in this study includes providing HRD scholars and practitioners with an empirical understanding of how they add value in a crisis context and as have been discussed in section 9.1 and 9.2 provides areas for further research and implications for HRD practice. Grounded theorists embrace modifiability (Glaser, 1998) meaning that new data may revise and elaborate on the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* further. For example, applying the theory to other types of crises such as natural disasters may result in further dynamic HRD roles being required to meet stakeholder expectations of HRD value.

#### **9.4 Personal reflection**

This doctoral study has challenged me throughout to think about and question the nature of HRD value within a crisis context. Through my own practitioner work, I had already encountered different theories relating to crisis learning, crisis management models and S/HRD models. Therefore prior to undertaking this research I felt that I had a broad understanding of the nature of HRD practices that would add value within a crisis context. However, in undertaking this research it has required me to re-engage with the different theories that exist regarding HRD value. Given the ongoing academic debate about HRD value I have found myself at times struggling to apply the various conceptualisations to my

study. In looking at HRD in a crisis context, I have had to engage with concepts around types, definitions and models of crisis. Integrating the two areas of interest, HRD and CM has both been a challenge and immensely rewarding. I have realised that the environmental conditions created by a crisis require looking beyond HRD value purely in terms of its contribution to performance, learning or organisational effectiveness. I have found that most of my time in this study has been understanding the subjective nature of HRD in a crisis context by listening to various stakeholders share their experiences. It has reinforced to me the importance of developing robust research designs to support the qualitative theory building process. Throughout the study I have been encouraged by my supervisors to embrace that qualitative research is a messy process and as a result I feel more comfortable and confident in my ability as a researcher.

At the time of writing, we are exiting the COVID pandemic, have seen the beginning of the Ukraine war with Russia, whilst the threat of a global recession looms with concerns around an energy crisis along with the ongoing climate change crisis. It would appear that crisis may indeed be our new normal with various crisis overlapping with each other. During the latter stages of my PhD, I experienced an organisational crisis within a charity that I served in a personal capacity as a Trustee, resulting in the removal of a CEO and an intensive period of Board and organisational activity. It was somewhat ironic that I was applying learnings from this study to my own situation. My own experiences gave me a greater appreciation for the impact that crises can have at a personal and organisational level. It reinforced the importance of aligning CM goals with HRD practices to move the charity beyond the initial impact and focus on survival into a place where it can learn, recover and ultimately move forward.

## 9.5 Final conclusion

This thesis has shown the value and importance for HRD scholars and practitioners in understanding the nature of HRD value in a post-crisis context. Specifically, there is value in HRD becoming conversant with CM models and using that insight to act as a strategic partner within the crisis process. Secondly, armed with this knowledge, HRD can design, deliver and evaluate HRD interventions that support organisational objectives at each stage in the crisis journey. Lastly, HRD value is demonstrated by the HRD function adopting dynamic HRD roles and capabilities that scan environmental changes and leverage these opportunities to deliver value to the organisation.

I began this thesis by identifying that crisis events such as the GFC and the more recent COVID pandemic require HRD scholars and practitioners to understand HRD value practices that support organisations in times of crisis (Wang, Hutchins, Garavan, 2009; James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011; Zulkarnaini et al., 2019). A challenge for developing this understanding is twofold; firstly, the nature of HRD value continues to be a contested debate amongst academics (Han et al., 2017; Mitakis, 2017; Stewart and Rigg, 2011). Much of the HRD value debate has been conducted in academia and within the context of organisational stability rather than in the turbulent and dynamic contexts that are created by a crisis (Mitsakis and Aravopoulou, 2016). Secondly, understanding the nature of HRD value in a post-crisis context has been limited due to the theories being conceptual in nature with a lack of empirical studies (Hutchins and Wang, 2008).

A review of the literature identified several gaps in our understanding of HRD value in a post-crisis context. Pre-crisis, the work of Aldrich et al., (2015) showed that within the UK Banking sector there was a particular emphasis on HR practitioners possessing appropriate

technical and professional knowledge to meet regulatory requirements and leveraging the use of metrics to make informed business decisions. This raised important questions for this study as to whether HRD possessed the relevant CM knowledge to support organisational management goals. Post-crisis, empirical studies of stakeholder perceptions showed that the GFC effectively back-footed HRD with questions raised about its legitimacy and creditability and ability to act strategically (Kebble-Ramsay and Armitage, 2015; Mistakis and Aravapoulou, 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). Understanding the role of environmental scanning as a component of SHRD maturity (Mitsakis, 2017) and the development of dynamic capabilities by HRD practitioners (Garavan et al., 2016) in a crisis context was identified as further gap in understanding which this study was able to address. HRD role metaphors have been used to explain the complexity of HRD practices in a crisis context (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). However, these approaches have been conceptual. The empirical nature of this study is a key contribution to extending our knowledge and understanding of the use of role metaphors in explaining HRD value in a crisis context. A final gap was identified as understanding specific HRD practices that are required at each crisis stage given the lack of empirical research in this area (Bowers et al., 2017; Bhaduri, 2019; Dirani et al., 2020; Wooten and James, 2010; Hutchins and Wang, 2008).

To address these gaps, this thesis investigated organisational stakeholder perceptions of HRD value within a specific sector, UK and Irish Banking, within a specific context, the years following the GFC which occurred in 2008. A multiple constituency approach (Campbell and Lambright, 2016, Garavan et al, 2019) was used and a contribution of this study was extending the views of constituencies to include the views of HR/D practitioners and external learning consultancies. The requirements of HRD are known to differ between stakeholder groups which can impact both positively and negatively on the perception of HRD value

(Bowen and Ostroff, 2016; Garavan et al, 2018; Mitsakis and Aravapoulou, 2016), however what is unclear is how stakeholder requirements may differ in a crisis context. This study examined the nature of these differences within stakeholder groups, across different organisations and how these requirements changed dependant on the crisis stage.

The study adopted a grounded approach and draws upon qualitative research data drawn from semi-structured interviews with 50 key stakeholders from 23 UK and Irish Banks. Further data was collected from a UK Bank consisting of 15 interviews and two focus groups comprising of 17 participants. The findings showed that HRD value is impacted negatively when it doesn't have an adequate knowledge and understanding of CM practices and principles and provides new insights as to why CM knowledge has been lacking in HRD (Hutchins and Wang, 2008; Wang, Hutchins and Garavan, 2009; Zulkarnaini et al.,2019). The study also identified that within a crisis there is potential for HRD to deliver a range of HRD practices that support CM specific objectives within each stage of the crisis (James, Wooten and Dushek, 2011). It extends existing knowledge by provided understanding of the role that re-defining organisational purpose has on HRD practise (Nizamidou and Vouzas, 2018). A third area that the findings identified was the specific dynamic capabilities and roles that HRD practitioners need to develop to effectively deliver against stakeholder requirements. It highlights the importance of the organisational HRD team being able to adapt and respond to changes in both the external and internal environments and the importance of environmental scanning to ensure that HRD practices are aligned with the business context and goals.

Based upon these findings, the thesis makes theoretical, practical as well as methodological

contributions to knowledge. Foremost, the study provides a robust theoretical model that extends our knowledge and understanding of HRD value in a post-crisis context. It extends our knowledge and understanding of HRD value within a specific context and addresses the call for empirically based studies that explain the nature of the HRD value proposition in dynamic contexts (Garavan et al., 2016; Mitsakis, 2017). The study opens up substantive new research paths which would allow the *dynamic HRD post-crisis theory* to be examined in against different crisis types, industries and geographies to elaborate and build on the theory presented in this thesis.

Regarding practical implications, the findings identify the need for CM knowledge to become more widely understood within the HRD community. In doing so, practitioners will be able to demonstrate technical and professional knowledge that can build trust and credibility with stakeholders (Gubbins et al., 2018). It emphasises the need for HRD to develop dynamic capabilities and engage with external experts to avoid developing a bounded mindset (Garavan et al., 2016; Turner, 1994). Finally, this study strengthens methodological approaches that seek to apply grounded theory to HRD research through the rigour and explanation in this thesis of the research process (Murphy, Klotz and Kreiner, 2017).

Whilst the nature of HRD value remains contested within the literature (Han et al., 2017, Mitsakis, 2017, Stewart and Rigg, 2011), this study has shown that by adopting appropriate research designs it is possible to develop a thorough understanding of specific HRD practices and roles that add value to organisations in times of extreme turbulence. Pursuing future research areas identified by this thesis has the potential to move the HRD value debate on and ensure that HRD practices are dynamic, environmentally integrated, and strategic in

supporting organisational goals.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A Information sheet for interviews (phase 1)

### Information Sheet: Organisational Psychology Research Project

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson

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#### Context:

HRD provision is a known critical aspect of organisational behaviour following a crisis. This phase within the crisis process provides an opportunity for HRD to play a role as a key strategic enabler to support the organisation. This study has a number of interlinked objectives:

1. *To understand the beliefs of organisational stakeholders have about how & why the crisis occurred within their organisation*
2. *To understand how the crisis has impacted upon HRD provision and the value of HRD practices*
3. *To identify characteristics that impact upon design, participation, embedding and evaluation of learning practices for the organisation*
4. *To understand what organisational characteristics contribute towards HRD becoming a strategic partner post-crisis*

#### Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

Adrian Eagleson is a part-time PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London responsible for data collection associated with this study. Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. All data will be anonymized and uploaded onto a secure, encrypted cloud based storage platform (Microsoft One Drive) accessible only by the researcher. The study will follow strict research protocols as outlined by the Ethics Committee of Birkbeck College.

#### What is involved in the study?

Should you choose to participate you will be asked to make yourself available for a semi-structured interview that will take place on-site or via conference call. A schedule of questions will be sent to you in advance. It is anticipated that interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes. You should have been employed in your current organisation since before 2008 to allow your views on the pre-crisis and post-crisis period to be explored.

#### Benefits

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Indirect benefits will include the promotion of understanding of what characteristics and processes enable HRD to act as a strategic enabler within organisations post-crisis.

What are your rights as a participant?

Taking part in the study is voluntary, however if you choose to you may withdraw from the study at any stage by informing the researcher. You will receive no payment for your participation.

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson's supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project. E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix B Consent form for interviews (phase 1)

### Participant Consent Form – Organisational Psychology Research Project

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson (PhD student, Birkbeck, University of London)

Research Participants name:

The interview will take 30-45 minutes. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying **information sheet** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced which you may request access to if you wish
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Adrian Eagleson as the research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Adrian Eagleson and academic supervisors with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be destroyed once a transcript has been created
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In academic papers
- In submission of a PhD thesis
- In an archive of the project

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time or not answer certain questions;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;

3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
7. I can ask to withdraw from the study until the point when data will be analysed, which will be approximately June, 2020. If I wish to withdraw, I can contact the researcher directly. By removing myself, I recognise that the researcher is unable to 'unhear' my interview, however none of my interview will be used in the analysis or write-up process.

**Printed Name**

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**Participants Signature**

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**Date**

---

**Researchers Signature**

---

**Date**

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson's supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project.

E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix C Sample interview guide for phase 1

Time schedule 30-45mins

Introductions	Intros and recap on the aims of the study. Clarify term HRD within their organisation. Remind them that questions shared are a guide and may move into different topics they raise. Confirm their availability for duration of call.
Briefing and consent	Recap on consent and their right to withdraw and the impact of ‘unhearing’ within the consent form.
Impact of the crisis	<i>What impact did the crisis have in your organisation? How has the crisis unfolded? (Look for clarity on crisis stages, characteristics of each stage), How was HRD impacted by the crisis?</i>
Strategic and value	<i>What role did HRD play pre-crisis? To what extent (if any) does HRD play a strategic role within your organisation? Are there other ways that HRD adds value?</i>
Learning	<i>How has the organisation learnt post-crisis? Are there examples of how HRD has had to deal with barriers to learning?</i>
Change	<i>Are there ways in which HRD has supported the organisation post-crisis to change?</i>
Risk	<i>How does the risk agenda impact HRD provision?</i>
Organisational* Purpose	<i>Has your organisation developed or re-defined its purpose or values as a result of the crisis? If so, what role (if any) has HRD played in this?</i>
Wrap up	<i>Anything further that is useful for me to be aware of? Are there other participants you recommend I speak to. Share next steps in where I am at in research.</i>

### Clarifying Prompts

<i>Please say more about</i>	<i>Is this different in other parts of the business?</i>
<i>Could you give me an example of XYZ?</i>	<i>Are there times when this is not the case?</i>
<i>How does XYZ happen?</i>	<i>Whom does this impact most?</i>
<i>Where does it happen?</i>	<i>When does it happen?</i>

\*Prioritise if running out of time



## Appendix D Information sheet for interviews (phase 2)

### Information Sheet – Organisational Psychology Research Project

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson

Email: [adrianeagleson@me.com](mailto:adrianeagleson@me.com)

#### Context:

HRD provision is a known critical aspect of organisational behaviour following a crisis. This phase within the crisis process provides an opportunity for HRD to play a role as a key strategic enabler to support the organisation. This study has a number of interlinked objectives:

5. *To understand the beliefs of organisational stakeholders have about how & why the crisis occurred within their organisation*
6. *To understand how the crisis has impacted upon HRD provision and the value of HRD practices*
7. *To identify characteristics that impact upon design, participation, embedding and evaluation of learning practices for the organisation*
8. *To understand what organisational characteristics contribute towards HRD becoming a strategic partner post-crisis*

#### Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

Adrian Eagleson is a part-time PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London responsible for data collection associated with this study. Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. All data will be anonymized and uploaded onto a secure, encrypted cloud based storage platform (Microsoft One Drive) accessible only by the researcher. The study will follow strict research protocols as outlined by the Ethics Committee of Birkbeck College.

#### What is involved in the study?

Your organisation has agreed to grant access to myself to conduct research and (name) has spoken with you about your willingness to take part based on your experiences within the organisation. Should you choose to participate you will be asked to make yourself available for a semi-structured interview that will take place on-site or via conference call. A schedule of questions will be sent to you in advance. It is anticipated that interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes. You should have been employed in (organisation name) since before 2008 to allow your views on the pre-crisis and post-crisis period to be explored.

#### Benefits

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Indirect benefits will include the promotion of understanding of what characteristics and processes enable HRD to act as a strategic enabler within organisations post-crisis.

What are your rights as a participant?

Taking part in the study is voluntary, however if you choose to you may withdraw from the study at any stage by informing the researcher. You will receive no payment for your participation.

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson's supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project.

E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix E Consent form for interviews (phase 2)

### Participant Consent Form – Organisational Psychology Research Project

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson (PhD student, Birkbeck, University of London)

Research Participants name:

The interview will take 30-45 minutes. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying **information sheet** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced which you may request access to if you wish
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Adrian Eagleson as the research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Adrian Eagleson and academic supervisors with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be destroyed once a transcript has been created
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In submission of a PhD thesis
- In an archive of the project

By signing this form I agree that;

8. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time or not answer certain questions;
9. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
10. I have read the Information sheet;
11. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;

12. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
13. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
14. I can ask to withdraw from the study until the point when data will be analysed, which will be approximately June, 2020. If I wish to withdraw, I can contact the researcher directly. By removing myself, I recognise that the researcher is unable to ‘unhear’ my interview, however none of my interview will be used in the analysis or write-up process.

**Printed Name**

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**Participants Signature**

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**Date**

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**Researchers Signature**

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**Date**

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson’s supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project.

E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix F Sample interview guide for phase 2

Time schedule 30-45mins

Introductions	Intros and recap on the aims of the study. Clarify term HRD within their organisation. Remind them that questions shared are a guide and may move into different topics they raise. Confirm their availability for duration of call.
Briefing and consent	Recap on consent and their right to withdraw and the impact of 'unhearing' within the consent form.
Impact of the crisis	<i>What impact did the crisis have in your organisation? How has the crisis unfolded? (Look for clarity on crisis stages, characteristics of each stage) How was HRD impacted by the crisis?</i>
Strategic and value	<i>What role did HRD play pre-crisis? To what extent (if any) does HRD play a strategic role within your organisation? Are there other ways that HRD adds value?</i>
Learning*	<i>How has the organisation learnt post-crisis? Are there examples of how HRD has had to deal with barriers to learning?</i>
Change	<i>Are there ways in which HRD has supported the organisation post-crisis to change?</i>
Risk	<i>How does the risk agenda impact HRD provision?</i>
Organisational* Purpose	<i>Has your organisation developed or re-defined its purpose or values as a result of the crisis? If so, what role (if any) has HRD played in this?</i>
Wrap up	<i>Anything further that is useful for me to be aware of? Are there other participants you recommend I speak to. Share next steps in where I am at in research.</i>

Clarifying prompts for above questions.

<i>Please say more about</i>	<i>Is this different in other parts of the business?</i>
<i>Could you give me an example of XYZ?</i>	<i>Are there times when this is not the case?</i>
<i>How does XYZ happen?</i>	<i>Whom does this impact most?</i>
<i>Where does it happen?</i>	<i>When does it happen?</i>

\*Prioritise if running out of time

## Appendix G Information sheet for focus groups (phase 2)

### Information Sheet: Organisational Psychology Research Project

#### Focus Group with employees within Case Study Organisation

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

#### Context:

HRD provision is a known critical aspect of organisational behaviour following a crisis. This phase within the crisis process provides an opportunity for HRD to play a role as a key strategic enabler to support the organisation

1. *To understand the beliefs of organisational stakeholders have about how & why the crisis occurred within their organisation*
2. *To understand how the crisis has impacted upon HRD provision and the value of HRD practices*
3. *To identify characteristics that impact upon design, participation, embedding and evaluation of learning practices for the organisation*
4. *To understand what organisational characteristics contribute towards HRD becoming a strategic partner post-crisis*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson

Email: [adrianeagleson@me.com](mailto:adrianeagleson@me.com)

#### Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

Adrian Eagleson is a part-time PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London responsible for data collection associated with this study. Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. All data will be anonymized and uploaded onto a secure, encrypted cloud-based storage platform (Microsoft One Drive) accessible only by the researcher. The study will follow strict research protocols as outlined by the Ethics Committee of Birkbeck College.

#### What is involved in the study?

Your organisation has agreed to grant access to myself to conduct research and (name) has spoken with you about your willingness to take part based on your experiences within the organisation. Should you choose to participate you will be asked to make yourself available for a focus group with 6-8 other colleagues that will take place on-site. It is anticipated that the focus group will last approximately 60 minutes. You should have been employed by (organisational name) since before 2008 to allow your views on the pre-crisis and post-crisis period to be explored.

#### Benefits

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Indirect benefits will include the promotion of understanding of what characteristics and processes enable HRD to act as a strategic enabler within organisations post-crisis.

#### What are your rights as a participant?

1. Taking part in the study is voluntary, however if you choose to you may withdraw from the study at any stage until the point when data will be analysed by informing the researcher. You will receive no payment for your participation.

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson's supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project.

E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix H Consent form for focus groups (phase 2)

### Focus Groups - Participant Consent Form – Organisational Psychology Research Project

Research project title: *Investigating Human Resource Development (HRD) value in a post-crisis context: Stakeholder perceptions following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)*

Researcher: Adrian Eagleson (PhD student, Birkbeck, University of London)

Research Participants name:

The focus group will take 60 minutes. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to withdraw from the focus group or withdraw from the research at any time. You will be with other colleagues from different departments within your organisation and at the beginning of the session, you will be asked to share your name and department by way of introduction.

At the beginning of the focus group, participants will be asked to agree to a Chatham House Agreement not to share any information outside of the group.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a focus group as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that participants explicitly agree to participation and how the information contained in their focus group will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying **information sheet** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the focus group may involve group work in pairs and key themes will be agreed with participants
- the notes and artifacts from the focus group will be analysed by Adrian Eagleson as the research investigator
- access to the focus group notes will be limited to Adrian Eagleson and academic supervisors with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary content, or direct quotations from the focus group, that are made available through the thesis will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

All or part of the content of the focus group may be used;

- In submission of Phd thesis
- In an archive of the project



By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can withdraw from the focus group at any time. By removing myself, I recognise that the researcher is unable to 'unhear' my contributions, however none of my contributions will be used in the analysis or write-up process.
2. The transcribed focus group notes from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the notes of the focus group and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I can ask to withdraw from the study until the point when data will be analysed, which will be approximately June, 2020. If I wish to withdraw, I can contact the researcher directly.
7. I will not share any information discussed within the focus group with others
8. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future

**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participants Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researchers Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

For more information

You can also contact Adrian Eagleson's supervisor; Martin McCracken if you have any further questions or concerns about the research project.

E-mail: [m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.mccracken@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix I Topic guide focus groups (phase 2)

Time schedule 60mins (6-8 participants)

Introductions	Intros and recap on the aims of the study. Clarify term HRD within their organisation. Remind them that questions shared are a guide and may move into different topics they raise. Ask to work in pairs to question sheets
Briefing and consent	Recap on consent and their right to withdraw and the impact of 'unhearing' within the consent form. Chatham House rules
Impact of the crisis	<i>How has the crisis unfolded in the organisation? (Look for clarity on crisis stages, characteristics of each stage) How was HRD impacted by the crisis and how has it responded?</i>
Strategic and value	<i>To what extent (if any) does HRD play a strategic role within your organisation? Are there other ways that HRD adds value?</i>
Learning	<i>How has the organisation learnt post-crisis? What are the barriers and enablers to (programme name) having a strategic role in the organisation?</i>
Organisational Purpose	<i>What has been impact of the new organisational purpose in the organisation?</i>
Wrap up	<i>Anything further that is useful for me to be aware of? Share next steps in where I am at in research.</i>

Use clarifying prompts in open discussion section (remind participants to state name so I can identify who is speaking):

<i>Please say more about</i>	<i>Is this different in other parts of the business?</i>
<i>Could you give me an example of XYZ?</i>	<i>Are there times when this is not the case?</i>
<i>How does XYZ happen?</i>	<i>Whom does this impact most?</i>
<i>Where does it happen?</i>	<i>When does it happen?</i>

## Appendix J Interview preparation questions

### Sample email correspondence

Subject: Preparation questions for PhD interview with Adrian Eagleson

Dear XXXX

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Hopefully the information sheet and consent form give you a good context of the area that I am interested in. I know time is precious so here are some questions that might be useful for you to think about in advance. These aren't fixed and I'm happy to explore other topics that you think are relevant.

- How has the crisis unfolded in your organisation and what impact has this had on HRD provision?
- To what extent (if any) does HRD play a strategic part in your organisation?
- How has the organisation learnt post-crisis?
- What impact has the risk agenda had on HRD?
- Has your organisation developed or re-defined its purpose or values as a result of the crisis?

Look forward to chatting on the xxxx. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Regards

Adrian

+447734\*\*\*\*\*

### Early mapping of categories against HRD Models

Garavan et al (2016) – Dynamic Capabilities SHRD Framework

Mitsakis (2017) SHRD in Dynamic times (Evidence from Greek Banking sector)

	Engagement with Regulator	Crisis Stage	HRD Voice	Org Provocateur	Red-Line Mgt
Garavan et 2016	Re-calibration & reconceptualization of SHRD stakeholder relationships (external)	SHRD sensing capabilities of external events	Characteristics of SHRD practices HRD Scalability capacity	SHRD seizing processes Org learning Capability Org Capacity for change & innovation External Knowledge integration	SHRD alignment with HRM practices
Mitsakis 2017	Macro & micro environments Environmental scanning could be used here & developed further SMCR capability	Environmentally integrated HRD strategies & plans Strategic partnership with HRM	Shape org mission & goals Role of HRD Executives	Strategic ability to shape & influence corporate culture Strategic partnership with key org stakeholders (eg Line Mgrs)	Emphasis on strategic HRD evaluation Environmentally integrated HRD strategies (elearning coming from cost reduction)

**Appendix L Focus Group pairs exercise example**

[Redacted]

**FOCUS GROUP**

Names:

[Redacted names]

Please discuss in pairs the following question & note down key thoughts/responses. Please be as specific as possible.

*What have been the barriers & enablers to [Redacted] having a strategic role in the organisation?*

Barriers	Enablers
Cultural differences across franchise + functions. → speed + success of rollout	Very strong Tone from the Top.
Leadership Buy in. (Wink management)	Leading by example - share stories - pictures / examples.
"Here's another one" Leadership Programme fatigue.	No exemptions - mandatory.
Volume of change + workload → lack of accountability	Learn from others - coaches + trainers within organisations.
	Coaches [Redacted] staff not consultants.
	Hasn't gone away! Syeerson.