Learning and Development trends in the Netherlands

Investigations in Dutch based multinationals

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Abstract

This research study is aimed at exploring and identifying current HRD (Human Resource Development) trends in multinationals based in the Netherlands and finding similarities and differences in spending on HRD activities between Dutch based multinational organizations and organization in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK).

A list of trends resulting from the literature was discussed with a group of Learning and Development experts and subsequently an adjusted list of trends was presented to practitioners from Dutch based multinational organizations. By means of a survey and interviews, participants were asked to outline their vision as to the recognition and importance of the identified HRD trends for their own organization. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

This study reveals new insights in trend drivers and confirms most drivers that were identified in the literature. Furthermore, results show that Dutch based multinationals recognize and practice eight HRD trends. Most popular trends are *Strategic talent management becomes essential* and *The workplace becomes the learning environment*. However *Learning focusses on increasing business results* is rated among the most important trends, but not yet recognized as much as it is important. Results of the comparison to US and UK based organizations revealed mostly similarities. It stands out that the UK has significantly more L&D (Learning & Development) staff per learner than Dutch and US based organizations.

Keywords: Human Resource Development trends, Learning and Development trends, Dutch based multinationals, Bersin Research, Trend drivers, Trend Emergence

Learning and Development trends in the Netherlands

Investigating Dutch multinationals

1   Introduction

Every year, Bersin and the ATD (Association for Talent Development, former ASTD) publish a trend report about the current state of the industry in the field of Learning and Development in the United States. Bersin by Deloitte is a leading research and advisory service firm in Enterprise Learning, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition and strategic HR Solutions (LinkedIn, n.d.) which provides an annual report about the state of the training industry in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). The corporate learning factbook provides benchmarks and guidance to help L&D executives make valuable investment decisions and fill the skill gaps for the long term (Bersin, n.d.). In response to these trend investigations Deloitte Netherlands wants to offer their clients a comparative market research about current learning and development trends in multinationals the Netherlands, so organizations will be able to follow and address trends.

In 1993, a replication of the ATD study has taken place in the Netherlands (Nijhof & De Rijk, 1997). It was concluded that most of the ATD roles were reflected in Dutch HRD practice (Nijhof, 2004). Following up on this replication study, Nijhof (2004) investigated whether the HRD role in the Netherlands had changed between 1993 and 1999, but found no significant changes. Contrasting to Nijhofs results, Iles, Preece & Chuai (2010) argue that the life cycle of trends has become shorter over time and more intensive. Also, Phillips (1999) advises continuous investigation of the profession because trends must be followed and addressed

(Phillips, 1999). As a result of the contrasting statements of Nijhof (2004), Phillips (1999) and

Iles, Preece and Chuai (2010), it is interesting to investigate whether there are new trends or

whether trends have changed or developed.

The trend reports by e.g. Bersin (O'Leonard, 2013 a, b & 2014) and the ATD (Miller,

2012) focus on collecting quantitative data, which captures developments in key metrics. But, it

is also important to understand current trends and indicators, which would help to proactively

and constructively influence potential future developments (Ruona, Lynham & Chermack, 2003,

McGuire & Cseh, 2006, Chermack, Lynham & Ruona, 2003, Streumer & Kommers, 2012).

According to Phillips (1999), information about trend emergence, key issues, concepts and the

impact of trends on the future of the HRD function are crucial for organizations to act in

response to trends.

Following above suggestions, this study will be concerned with exploring and identifying

current HRD trends in multinational organizations in the Netherlands, their emergence and

practices.

2   HRD trends

2.1 Defining *HRD* and *trends*

HRD stands for Human Resource Development, which is a widespread term in the

academic literature. HRD refers to "a process of developing and unleashing human expertise

through organization development and personal training and development for the purpose of

improving performance" (Swanson & Holton, 2001, p.8). In the international context, McLean

and McLean (2001) explain, the scope of activities in HRD varies in different countries from only

training activities to all activities that make it possible for every citizen of a country to develop

professionally as a part of national development. The definitions of many countries are

influenced by the United States (US) concept, as there is a predominance of US-based literature

available (McLean & McLean, 2001). In European organizations HRD is also referred to as

learning and development.

The term *trend* in the context of HRD or HRM is not defined well. Against expectations,

it is not referring to a limited period of time. A trend in general is commonly defined as 'a

general direction in which something is developing or changing' or 'a fashion' ("Trend", (n.d.)).

In the field of management, which HRD is a part of, techniques are seen as trends when they

"appear both rational (efficient means to important ends) and progressive (new, as well as

improved relative to older management techniques)" (Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010, p. 131).

Trends are usually formulated in ambiguous concepts and general terms which make them

applicable for many parties and situations (Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010). They differ in scope and

duration (Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010). "Finding, adopting and then abruptly dropping the „latest

and greatest" organizational improvement or HRD programme is a widely recognized

phenomenon" (Pascal, 1990 in Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010, p. 131).

2.2 Trend emergence

Trends in HRD derive from developments inside and outside the domain (Chermack,

Lynham & Ruona, 2003; Kwakman & Streumer, 2002). Major influences that cause a trend are

called drivers (Phillips, 1999). The presence or absence of drivers can reveal much insight about

the progress of the trend and how it can be managed (Phillips, 1999). Understanding the drivers

can help predict the magnitude and scope of the trend or similar trends in the future (Phillips, 1999).

Kwakman and Streumer (2002) explain that HRD developments are reactive to developments inside and outside the organization. These inside and outside changes are for example: New demands and challenges (Kwakman & Streumer, 2002), globalization or global competition (Nijhof, 2004; Ellinger, 2004), ICT developments (Nijhof, 2004; Ellinger, 2004), a growing emphasis on cost efficiency and effectiveness (Ellinger, 2004), migration (Nijhof, 2004), the development of a knowledge society (Nijhof, 2004), ideas about employability, lifelong learning and the learning organization (Nijhof, 2004), or management frustration, the need to innovate or to improve organizational performance (Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010). Smith (2003) explains that training is triggered by a variety of factors, but critical is the link to the business strategy.

2.3 HRD trends in prior research

Only a limited number of research studies focuses on identifying HRD trends in the Netherlands. A study in 1993 identified that the HRD roles elaborated by the ATD are similar to the Dutch HRD roles (Nijhof & De Rijk, 1997). Streumer (personal communication, 28 September 1998 in McLean & McLean, 2001, table 1, p.316) defines HRD in the Netherlands as "all training and development interventions that are made to create and further develop human expertise within the context of an organization in order to (further) improve the effectiveness of the organization". The role of HRD in the Netherlands has an emphasis on the training function (Nijhof, 2004). HRD trend research has taken place in different countries. In

order to identify the current trends, a systematic literature review was performed by the author (see Appendix F). In different databases (Google scholar, Eric, Business Elite, UTwenteUB, Scopus and Web of Science) articles from 1999 on were reviewed. An analysis of the key concepts resulted in the following eight trends:

(1) HRD is developing from a training function to a strategic business function. HRD expands in scope and now also has the function to create a workforce that has the knowledge and skills to increase the competitive advantage of the company (Azevedo, 2013; Chermack, Lynham & Ruona, 2003; Streumer & Kommers, 2012; Nijhof, 2004; Lee & Lai, 2012; O'Leonard, 2013a+b; Cascio, 2014; Jordense & Verdonschot, 2011);

(2) Talent development: Emphasis on developing individuals to enhance performance. The employee's passions and intellectual capital must be utilized and developed to increase organizational performance (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014 Chermack, Lynham & Ruona, 2003; Nijhof, 2004; Streumer & Kommers, 2012; Jordense & Verdonschot, 2011);

(3) Shift of employee's job requirements from technical to soft skills. Employers prefer people with communication and problem-solving skills. These enable and support innovation and knowledge creation which assist competitive advantage (Kwakman & Streumer, 2002; Smith, 2003);

(4) Life-long employment is replaced by life-long employability. Employees are not spending their whole life at the same company. For job security, employees must have attractive knowledge and skills for different employers. Responsibility for learning and development is now distributed among employer and employee. As an employee you need to

remain attractive for the market. As an employer you need well-educated staff for competitive

advantage (Cascio, 2014; Streumer & Kommers, 2012; Lee & Lai, 2012; Chermack, Lynham &

Ruona, 2003);

(5) Technology is becoming a facilitator for learning in organizations. Technology

facilitates the availability and exchange of information and knowledge by e.g. knowledge

management, learning content management, expertise register, forums, blogs, wikis and social

media (Jordense & Verdonschot, 2011; O'Leonard, 2013b; Miller, 2012; Lee & Lai, 2012;

Azevedo, 2013; Cascio, 2014);

(6) Most learning is informal and in many cases on-the-job. Learning is needed to

improve work performance. Learning is part of the daily work. Learning happens during work

(Streumer & Kommers, 2012; Lee & Lai, 2012; O'Leonard, 2013a, b; Jordense & Verdonschot,

2011);

(7) Development towards collaborative and team learning. Working in a team and

learning from each other increases the knowledge of team members and individuals and

optimizes outcomes (Streumer & Kommers, 2012; O'Leonard, 2013a+b; Chermack, Lynham &

Ruona, 2003; Lee & Lai, 2012; Casio, 2014);

(8) Classroom-based training is declining. Because it is expensive and time consuming,

classroom-based training is replaced by technology-enhanced methods (Dilworth, 2003; Miller,

2012; Streumer & Kommers, 2012; Wang, 2011; O'Leonard, 2013a, b; Peretz & McGraw, 2011;

Smith, 2003; Jordense & Verdonschot, 2011).

3   Research Question

Based on the information above, this study investigates which trend drivers can be identified and how HRD trends are acknowledged in the Dutch context. Therefore the first step is to investigate what trends are lived up in organizations, then the popularity of trends will be investigated and it is distinguished how trends are followed. Additionally this research study identifies similarities and differences between Dutch based multinationals, US and UK based organizations. The following research question is formulated:

How are HRD trends acknowledged in Dutch based multinationals and what are differences in spending on HRD activities in the Netherlands compared to the United States and the United Kingdom?

To thoroughly answer this research question the following sub questions are defined:

1. What are trend drivers in Dutch based multinationals?
2. How do the trends from the literature reflect in the Dutch context?
3. What are differences in spending on HRD activities between Dutch based multinationals compared to United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) based organizations?

4   Method

4.1 Context

This study has been conducted in cooperation with the Learning Solutions department of Deloitte Netherlands. The Learning Solutions department offers a broad range of services in the field of corporate learning and development for organizations in the European context. Deloitte has served as client and in partnership with the Learning and Development consultants

from the Learning Solutions team this study was performed. Deloitte requested to perform an

investigation of the Learning and Development trends in Dutch based multinationals. As the

Learning Solutions team of Deloitte Netherlands makes use of academic knowledge and

approaches, this study contributes to the stock of available knowledge and insights in Dutch

L&D trends.

4.2 Instrumentation

In this section the different research steps will be presented in chronological order. As

briefly described before, a systematic literature review into current HRD trends has been

performed (see Paragraph 2.3). In table 1 the approach underlying this study is summarized.

The literature review is the point of departure for the first step, the expert interviews. The

expert interviews, for which Deloitte consultants were approached, serve as a basis for

answering the first and the second sub question. Step 2 comprised a survey, step 3 included in-

depth interviews. For step 2 and 3, representatives of L&D departments from Dutch based

multinationals were approached. Both the survey and the in-depth interviews aim at answering

sub question 2 and 3 and measured three variables: (1) perceived recognition of trends

(hereafter also referred to as *degree of recognition*), (2) perceived importance of trends

(hereafter also referred to as *degree of importance*) and (3) example of practices of trends

(hereafter also referred to as *practices*). These three variables are established to measure how

HRD trends are acknowledged, as formulated in the main research question. The survey

additionally measured variables that were needed for the comparative analysis with the Bersin

research (O' Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014), which is the fourth and last step of the approach. This

covers a comparative analysis with variables from the Bersin research by O'Leonard (2013a, b,

2014): Target groups of L&D departments (*target groups*), L&D budget, Completed training

hours per learner (*training hours*), Median number of training staff personnel in fulltime-

equivalent (FTE) (*training staff*), Staff members (FTE) assigned to the L&D function (*FTE's*), Top

5 Delivery methods. The comparative analysis aims at answering the third sub question. Below

the approach is discussed in more detail.

Table 1.
Approach

Step	Instrument	Participants/ Source	RQ	Variables
1	Expert interviews	Deloitte consultants	1, 2	Identification of trends Trend drivers Description of trends
2	Survey	Dutch based multinationals	2, 3	Perceived recognition of trends Perceived importance of trends Example of practices of trends Target groups of L&D departments L&D budget Completed training hours per learner Median number of training staff personnel in fulltime-equivalent (FTE) Staff members (FTE) assigned to the L&D function Top 5 Delivery methods
3	In-depth interviews	Dutch based multinationals	2	Perceived recognition of trends Perceived importance of trends Example of practices of trends
4	Comparative analysis	Bersin study (O'Leonard, 2013a, b + 2014) & Survey data	3	Target groups of L&D departments L&D budget Completed training hours per learner Median number of training staff personnel in fulltime-equivalent (FTE) Staff members (FTE) assigned to the L&D function Top 5 Delivery methods

4.3 Expert interviews

Expert interviews aimed at identifying trends, trend drivers and trend descriptions, focused on the Dutch context. In other words, the expert interviews give answer to the first research question. The semi-structured interview consisted of three blocks: Identification of trends by means of a brainstorm and a discussion of the outcomes, Description of trends by means of a group discussion about the trends as identified in the literature (see paragraph 2.3) and Identification of trend drivers by means of a collaborative brainstorm. The interview script can be found in appendix A.

Identifying trends. The interview started with a brainstorm. Therefore, a definition of the concept trend was provided. Subsequently the experts were asked to write down trends they observe during their work at multinational organisations in the last months. To follow up, notes from the experts were compared to each other and to the results from the literature review (see Paragraph 2.3) by discussing these with the group. The results of the discussion about the presence or absence of trends was translated into a new list of trends that is concentrated on the trends in the Dutch based multinational market.

Description of trends. Each trend in the list of trends was supplemented with a description. The description is based on answers of the experts from the interview about how they recognize a certain trend in organizations and key concepts.

Identifying trend drivers. Experts were asked to indicate reasons for organizations to follow trends, and to explain why organizations follow the trends discussed earlier.

The interview script was evaluated by peer debriefing (Baarda, De Goede & Teunissen, 2009) with one L&D consultant and two university teachers. Also the first interview was regarded as a pilot and was evaluated together with the interview participants regarding improvements and quality. The Deloitte consultants were pleased by the interaction and material used in the interview. The interviewer observed that a more detailed definition of terms and trends might be helpful. This was enhanced in the second interview.

Participants. Five Deloitte consultants were approached as experts for group interviews (2-3 people). The consultants are part of the Learning Solutions team of Deloitte and are approached via e-mail. The interviews were semi-structured and the duration was set to one hour. All Deloitte consultants agreed to participate. All participants are female, have at least 3.5 years of experience in advising about learning and development in organizations and are experienced consultants for multinational organizations. Four participants had the level managers, one participant the level senior consultant.

Analysis. The interviews were taped and transcribed for the analysis. By making use of the program Atlas.ti the interview transcript was coded. The trend list from the literature review was used as a codebook (see Appendix B). The code list shows the trends that are investigated in prior research (see Paragraph 2.3) and three codes were added: description, driver and no trend. No trend was assigned in combination with a trend when experts did not recognize this trend in their work. In the codebook (see Appendix B), all codes are described, defined and examples were provided on how the trend can be recognized in the text. The ontological point of departure is the study of signal words conveying meaning, expressing socio-cultural processes (structures, functions). The codes were assigned to quotations. Per

quotation different codes can be assigned and combined. For example, if one quotation consists of two different trends both trends were assigned. Sentences have been grouped together to quotations if there is a compounding word present. For example: The tree is 100 years old. It was planted by my grandfather. The 'it' would be the compounding word. This way of coding is called axial coding. The quotations used to report about the results are modified concerning spelling and confidential information.

To answer the first sub question, the data was reduced to the code of interest: 'driver'. The contents of the quotations were listed, sorted into two categories: internal influences and external influences (reference) and presented in the results.

To answer the second sub question, the data was reduced to the codes 'Identification' and 'Description'. A trend is considered identified when the code of the trend has been assigned to a quotation, a trend is rejected when the code *no trend* was assigned. Also the description of the trend was discussed during the interview. Based on the alterations and confirmations of the expert a trend was removed, redefined, merged or added. For example *Most learning is informal and in many cases on-the-job* and *Classroom-based training is declining* were merged because the experts argued that workplace learning is replacing classroom-based training and therefore present the same concept. Based on this analysis, a second list of trends was established which now can be characterized as focused to the Dutch multinational context.

4.4 Survey and In-depth interviews

Subsequent to the expert interviews, the adjusted trend list resulting from the expert interview was presented to the target audience, Dutch based multinationals, by means of a survey and in-depth interviews. Like in the expert interviews, organizations were asked about their driver for following HRD trends, which refers to the first research question. To answer the second sub question L&D departments were asked to score the trends based on the degree to which the trend can be recognized (perceived recognition of trends) in the organization and the degree to which the trend is important (perceived importance of trends). Moreover, participants were asked to describe their current practices that relate to a trend (examples of practices of trends).

Measuring perceived recognition of trends. The degree of recognition refers to the extent to which a HRD professional of the organizations finds the characteristics of a trend present in the organization. This variable measures eight trends with one item, which means that eight trends are listed and each trend is rated on a scale from 0 to 100%. Zero means that no elements of this trend can be recognized in the organizations processes. One hundred percent on the other hand means that organizations recognize many elements of the trend in the organisations processes. In the survey this variable is measured with a scrollbar. In the interview, the participants rated the percentage on a bulletin board. Below this variable is also referred to as recognition.

Measuring perceived importance of trends. The degree of importance refers to the extent to which participants find the trend important. Kwakman and Streumer (2002) asked

participants to indicate which HRD development has been most important to their organization. This was adopted in this study and extended to a rating of all trends by means of a scale from 0 to 100%, like the variable recognition. Below this variable is also referred to as importance.

Measuring examples of practices of trends. This variable is measured with four items. In the survey it is measured quantitatively in terms of a top 5 investments in terms of time and money in the trends (see Appendix C). The second item, also measured in the survey is the delivery method top 5 (see Appendix C). Delivery methods are Instructor-led training, online self-study, collaboration/ feedback and other methods. In the in-depth interview practices are measured qualitatively by asking questions about actions and effort that are put into the realization of the trend and key challenges (see Appendix D). This study differentiates between recognition and practice because there might be a discrepancy between recognizing something that is already happing and making effort to increase practices or to establish practices. Below this variable is also referred to as practices.

Participants. Twenty-five HRD professionals from different Dutch based multinationals have been approached via a personal e-mail to participate in the study. Organizations were selected based on convenience sampling. Main criterion for selection is that the organization must be operating in the Netherlands. The approached organizations are varying between 1 500 and 90 000 employees. Therefore, the sample is non-random and predominantly homogeneous. 20 multinationals were selected based on an existing relationship with Deloitte clients and former clients, supplemented with five non-Deloitte clients to increase sample variance.

A total of 14 L&D departments participated in this study, consisting of seven survey participants and nine in-depth interview participants. This is a response rate of 56%. Nine organizations participated in in-depth interviews of which two also completed the survey beforehand. The sample included 9 large organizations (10000+) and 5 midsize organizations (1.000 – 9.999). The seven interviews were group interviews with up to two representatives of the L&D department and joined by a Deloitte consultant. In total 11 interviewees participated in the in-depth interviews. Seven participants were female, four participants were male. Due to varying department sizes, participants have different functions, from L&D officer to learning director. All participants are employed in a multinational operating organization from different industries: 3 Banking, 3 Energy, 1 Oil/ Gas, 2 Telecommunication, 1 Professional services, 1 Electronics, 1 Athletic equipment, 1 Aircraft and 1 Railway. All organizations are compensated by getting access to the results, a benchmark report and the opportunity to network with other participants and relevant professionals during a round table discussion debating the results from this study, facilitated by Deloitte.

Data collection of the survey. The survey was administered by the author via e-mail during January and February 2015. The survey was interactive, which means that follow-up questions are based on the answers of a previous question. Participants were asked to brainstorm trends in the profession of HRD by using their company as an example. A brainstorm as first part of the survey serves as validation and confirmation of the trend list established in the expert interviews, which substantiates that all significant trends were included. The trends in the brainstorm matched the adjusted list of trends that was presented later in the survey.

Moreover, questions about the HRD department and the organization were added as well. The questions about the HRD department and the organization are replicates from the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a) and are further explained below (comparative analysis).

Data collection of the interview. The in-depth interviews were conducted during April 2015. The semi-structured interview consisted of five open answer questions. Similar to the survey, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they recognize a trend in their organization and to rate the degree to which their organization finds it important to follow the trend on a scale from 0 to 100%. The interview also focused on questions like why particular trends in their organization are practiced (or not), how trends are lived up to, what obstacles or challenges are encountered and how organizations predict the future of their L&D organization. The interview script can be found in appendix D.

Analysis. The variables *Recognition* and *Importance* were analysed using the program SPSS 23 and assemble descriptive statistics minimum, maximum, median, average, range, standard deviation. The data was tested for normality. According to Kline (2005) data are normally distributed when the skewness and the kurtosis of the variables are between +2 and -2. In this study, the skewness and Kurtosis of the variables are satisfactory. Two variables exceed the value proposed by Kline (2005) by less than 0.35, which is disregarded because of visual analysis of histograms and boxplots.

Examples of practices of trends. The current practices in organizations were investigated by coding (see Appendix E) in the qualitative parts of the survey and the relevant answers from the in-depth interview. The data is put into a matrix. The matrix consists of the

eight trends in the rows and the organization name in the column. The matrix is analysed per trend by looking for similarities among organizations. Those practices that were found in at least five organizations were presented. Examples for practices were presented almost unaltered, even though only one organization has indicated the specific practice. How the quantitative data (top 5 investments, top 5 delivery methods) is processed is described in the results section.

4.5 Comparative Analysis

The data to answer the third sub question was retrieved from (a) the Bersin report by O'Leonard (2013a, b, 2014) and (b) the survey, more precisely the variables L&D budget, Training hours, Training staff, FTE's, Top 5 Delivery methods. Subsequently calculations were performed to transform the variables from the survey data into metrics as defined by O'Leonard (2013a):

Total L&D Spending per Learner. Total training spending divided by number of learners served.

L&D Staff per 1,000 Learners. Median number of training staff personnel for every 1,000 learners.

Annual Training Hours per learner. Median number of formal training hours completed per learner.

Percentage of hours delivered via ILT (Instructor-Led Training), online self-study, VILT (Virtual Instructor-Led Training), Collaboration/ Feedback, other methods. Average percent of

training hours delivered via ILT, online self-study, VILT, Collaboration/ Feedback, other

methods.

Most variables that were measured in this research study were the same as in the Bersin

research ('O Leonard, 2013a). Therefore the metrics can be compared to each other. However,

the metric 'Percentage of hours delivered via' was measured by a top 5 of the delivery

methods, instead of asking for a percentage of the total budget as in the Bersin research by

O'Leonard (2013a). The data was converted into a percentage to make it comparable. For the

metric 'Total L&D spending per learner' the currency was converted to Euro (€) by using the

currency calculator (Google, n.d.). The metrics are presented in graphs in the results section.

The graphs in this study present on the one hand the results for the Dutch based participants,

and on the other hand the results from the Bersin research in the US from 2012 and 2013

(O'Leonard, 2013a, 2014) and the UK (O'Leonard, 2013b).

4.6 Reliability and Validity

Next to the already described efforts to ensure validity and reliability, in this study

validity is increased by data-source triangulation. Consequently different information sources

were investigated (the available literature, experts and representatives of the target

population). All sources identified trends trough open-answer questions. Also method-

triangulation was applied: The different data sources were approached with different

instruments: interviews and survey.

An evaluation of all instruments was applied by peer debriefing and piloting with experts

or participants. The interviews were evaluated to minimize misinterpretations, make sure

questions support answering the research question and to be interactive and motivating for the participants. The survey was evaluated on language, clearness of questions, answer options and functionality. The relevance of the questions in the survey and the interview were evaluated together with a university professor and with a Deloitte L&D expert. Furthermore questions were evaluated with experts by checking whether the answers are logical answers to the questions and whether all possible answer options are available to choose from. Also, language and different operating systems (Windows 7, 8 and Apple Mac) were assessed. The survey does not work on Apple computers. All tested Windows operating systems and Excel versions worked with little layout differences.

The results of this research study can be compromised because participants self-rated their organizations' behaviour which could lead to socially desirable answers. This study evaluated whether there were significant differences between survey and interview participants for the average scores for the variables recognition and importance. The average score for recognition was twelve points higher in the survey than in the interview, which suggests that the personal contact during the interviews did not lead to higher scores on this variable. The average of the variable importance was insignificantly higher, four points in the interviews.

Also interpretative awareness (Baarda et al., 2005) is taken into account during analysis. Interrater reliability was not accounted for because to a large extend the analysis is descriptive in nature. The researcher is aware of the subjectivity while interpreting the data and also worked with an open mind for interpretation. The established codes are not considered

complete or correct. This means that throughout the analysis codes and their descriptions were adjusted when the data suggested this.

5   HRD trends in Dutch based multinationals

In this paragraph the results of this study will be presented by reference to the measured variables: trend drivers, identification of trends, perceived recognition of trends and perceived importance of trends, examples of practices of trends and the comparative variables (Target groups of L&D departments, L&D budget, Completed training hours per learner, Median number of training staff personnel in fulltime-equivalent (FTE), Staff members (FTE) assigned to the L&D function, Top 5 Delivery methods).

5.1 Trend drivers

Experts and in-depth interview participants were asked to identify trend drivers. The experts identified business issues like observations of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, unawareness of costs, bad evaluations and the need for performance improvement and innovation. Experts also revealed that being attractive as an employer is the motivation to offer career opportunities. Additionally, the idea of a single employee (often leaders) can be the driver for a trend in a particular organization.

Moreover, externally influenced drivers were mentioned: the economy, globalisation, ICT developments, demographic development (at this moment the aging population), available labour force (no matching candidates for the vacant position), the adoption of best practices and solutions of other organizations, applying new insights from research or influences from consultancy.

During the in-depth interviews with the multinationals it became clear that the motivation for introducing trends are the same in most organizations: The need for a sustainable, employable workforce, the fast changing environment and the motivation to become more innovative, fast adapting and client oriented.

5.2 Identification of trends in Dutch context

Trends from the literature review were discussed and evaluated with Deloitte consultants during expert interviews. During the interviews the trends were supplemented, restructured and exemplified according to the experts' experiences in their daily work at multinational organizations in Netherlands. As a result the list of trends was tailored to the Dutch market. When comparing the trend list from the literature to the trend list that was established during the expert interviews as in table 2, it is noticeable that both lists have the same amount of trends, six trends are very similar, one is added, one was combined and one was removed. The descriptions of the trends are discussed in more detail in this paragraph.

The most important adjustments were based on the code description: (1) combining trends that are closely related to each other: Most learning is informal and in many cases on-the-job and Classroom-based training is declining, (2) reformulating trends: e.g. *HRD is developing from a training function to a strategic business function* becomes *Learning focuses on increasing business results*, (3) adding or adjusting descriptions with practice examples and (4) removing trends that had the code 'no trend'. The resulting trend list is presented in the paragraphs below.

Table 2.
Trends in the literature and according to experts

Trends according to literature	Trends according to experts
HRD is developing from a training function to a strategic business function	Learning focuses on increasing business results.
Talent development: Emphasis on developing individuals to enhance performance	Strategic talent management becomes essential.
-	Personalized and customized learning: focus on the individual learner.
Shift of employee's job requirements from technical to soft skills	-
Life-long employment is replaced by life-long employability	Learners become more self-directed.
Technology is becoming a facilitator for learning in organizations	Mobile learning becomes popular.
Most learning is informal and in many cases on-the-job Classroom-based training is declining	The workplace is the learning environment.
Development towards collaborative and team learning	More knowledge sharing and team learning.
-	Increased need for content curation.

Learning focuses on increasing business results. Learning and Development

organizations put greater emphasis on effective and cost-efficient learning that positively

impacts business results. For example, the strategic use of resources (knowledge, human

resources, technologies), alignment with business goals, directing increasing innovation and

work capability. For these matters, organizations measure the impact of learning on business

results, analyse expenses, restructure and integrate learning in the whole organization ((de-) centralization of learning) and establish learning management systems, global databases, global curricula or corporate universities.

Strategic talent management becomes essential. The strategic development, attraction, incorporation and retention of an "expertise elite" is getting more attention. Organizations invest in human capital that can increase organizational performance. Performance support and succession management, on-boarding systems and staff databases, networks or stretching assignments are representative for this trend.

Personalized and customized learning: focus on the individual learner. More learning contents and materials are customized for the learner. Learning contents meet the individual's goals, passion and talent. Learning material and level are linked to the learner's preferences, present knowledge, abilities and skills. Learning materials are directed to those who need or want them by the use of technology.

Learners become more self-directed. Learners become more responsible for their Learning and Development. Learners themselves determine their own career paths and choose their own learning contents and methods. Employees are responsible for their employability, mobility and transferability by developing expertise and becoming a lifelong learner. Organizations use employee self-service environments to facilitate and support self-directed learning or stimulate and facilitate informal learning.

Mobile learning becomes popular. Adjusted to the present needs for flexibility and mobility, the contemporary learner learns anyplace and any time with smartphones, tablets

and laptops. Next to classrooms or the work environment, mobile learning is becoming accepted. Time and location are not fixed in this form of learning. Mostly formal or non-formal learning modes are available: online-learning, e-learning, blended learning, massive open online courses (MOOC's).

The workplace is the learning environment. More often organizations facilitate learning in the workplace. Learning is part of the daily work and integrated in work processes by the use of informal learning tools and technologies. Learning on the job, practice based and experiential learning have proven to be powerful strategies.

More knowledge sharing and team learning. Digital and personal forms of knowledge sharing are increasingly applied. Professionals in the same field meet in order to share knowledge, learn from each other by discussing and evaluating practices. Environments for such practices are blogs, social media and forums or in general the World Wide Web, but also lunch and shares, knowledge sessions, conferences, etc.

Increased need for content curation. Instead of generating and delivering instruction material and content, HRD regulates, structures, organizes, facilitates and enables learning. They organize and structure available content and technologies, then they connect the learner and the learning content. Systems that support the HRD professional in these tasks are for example Knowledge Management Systems (KMS), Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS), and Course Management Systems (CMS).

Trends as described above (see Paragraph 4.2) were presented to HRD professionals from Dutch based multinational organizations. The organizations were asked to indicate the

degree to which they recognize each trend (see Figure 1), the degree to which they find the

trend important (see Figure 2) and to describe their practices. Furthermore survey participants

were asked to indicate investments in terms of time and money (see Figure 3) and to indicate

their most used delivery methods (see Figure 4). Below, first the results from quantitative data

are presented, followed by an in-depth description of organizations practices concerning each

trend.

5.3 Recognition and importance of trends

    Recognition of trends in multinational organizations. Figure 1 shows a boxplot with

inter alia the minimum, maximum and median value of the dataset regarding the variable

recognition. Organizations vary a lot in the degree to which they recognize a trend (see Figure
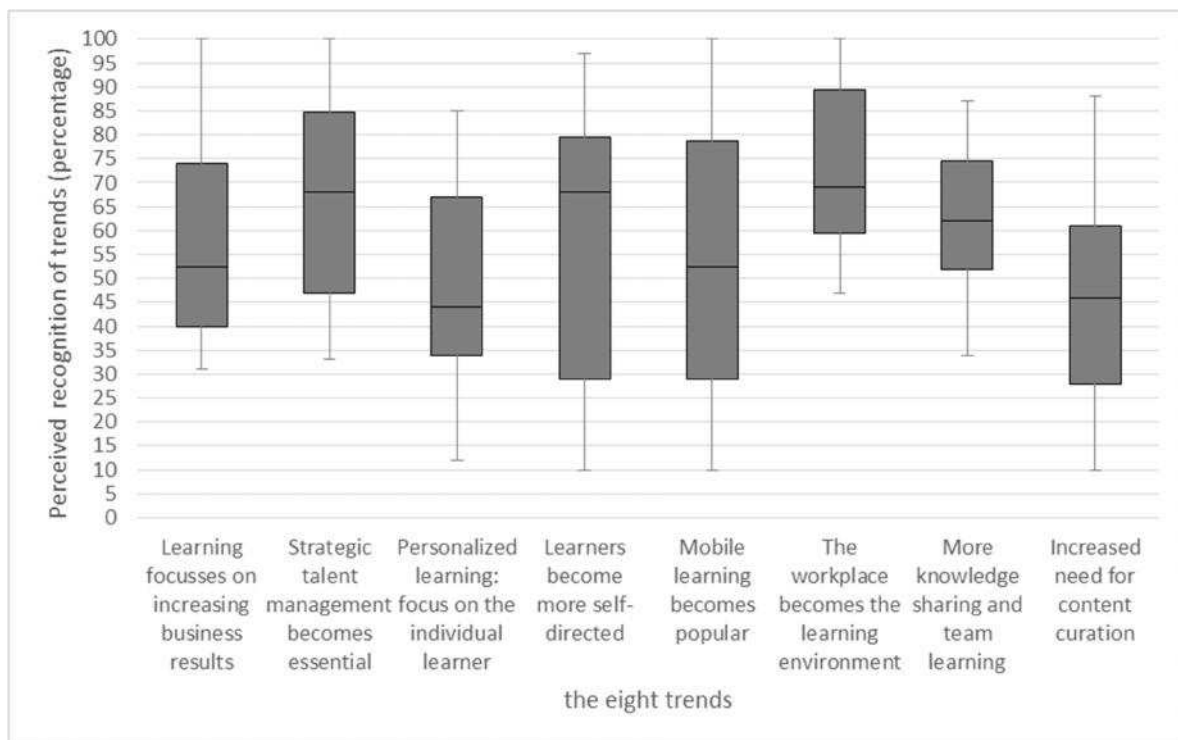
1).

Figure 1. Distribution of recognized trends (N=14)

For example *Mobile learning becomes popular* has a range of 90 points, which describes a great dissimilarity among organizations. The lowest discrepancy in recognition was found in *The workplace becomes the learning environment*, which has a range of less than 55 points. Even though *The workplace becomes the learning environment* has the lowest range, ratings still vary considerably. Therefore, a great variety in which trends are recognized is identified. Due to these great differences, it is concluded that there is no common and clear focus among organizations. However, all organizations do recognize all trends to a higher or lower degree.

Interpreting the boxplot based on the score of the median value and the range one can conclude that the two most recognized trends are *The workplace is the learning environment* and *Strategic talent management becomes essential*. These two trends find a median value higher than 65 points and a relatively small range compared to other trends. Furthermore *Learners become more self-directed* also has a median value of higher than 65 points, but has a great range. *More knowledge sharing and team learning* still has a high median value of more than 60 points, with a relatively low range. Two trends have a median value of less than 50 points: *Personalized learning: focus on the individual learner* and *Increased need for content curation*. These trends are considered least recognized by the participants of this research.

Importance of trends in multinational organizations. Figure 2 shows a boxplot with the minimum, maximum and median value of the dataset regarding the variable importance. It is noticeable that the importance of trends has higher values than the recognition of trends (see Table 3). Also, the range for all trends is smaller for the variable importance than for the variable recognition (see Figure 1 and 2). In other words, organizations are more unanimous in finding trends important, than they are in recognizing the trends in their organization.

Organizations are most consistent about the importance of *Learning focuses on business results* and *The workplace becomes the learning environment*. They are least consistent about *Personalized and customized learning: Focus on the individual learning, Mobile learning becomes popular* and *Increased need for content curation*.

Trends that have a median value of higher than 85 points are considered most important. These are: *Learning focusses on business results, Strategic talent management becomes essential* and *The workplace is the learning environment*. It is noticeable that *Strategic talent management becomes essential* and *The workplace is the learning environment* already were the most recognized trends. *Increased need for content curation* is found least important by organizations with respect to the median value, but also has the highest range.
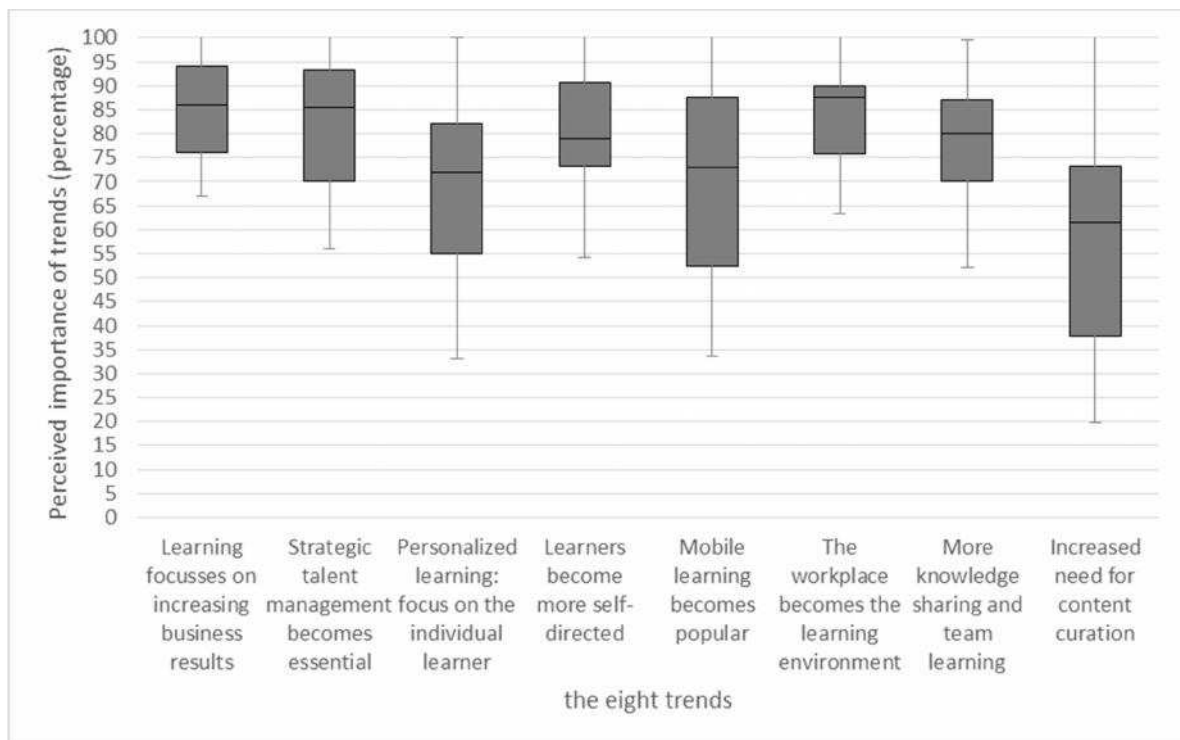

Figure 2. Distribution of importance of trends (N=14)

Discrepancy between recognition and importance. Assuming that trends that are important, but not recognized need attention of the HRD department in the near future, this paragraph will focus on the identification of these trends. In table 3, the median values of the trends of the variables recognition and importance are shown.

The discrepancy between the median values of recognition and importance is above 20 points for *Learning focuses on increasing business results* (34 points), *Personalized and customized learning: focus on the individual learner* (28 points) and *Mobile learning becomes popular* (21 points). It can also be identified that *Learners become more self-directed* has the least discrepancy (11 points).

Table 3
Discrepancy between variables recognition and importance

Trend	Recognition (Mdn)	Importance (Mdn)	Discrepancy (Points)
Learning focuses on increasing business results.	52,5	86	34
Strategic talent management becomes essential.	68	85,5	18
Personalized and customized learning: focus on the individual learner.	44	72	28
Learners become more self-directed.	68	79	11
Mobile learning becomes popular.	52,5	73	21
The workplace is the learning environment.	69	87,5	19
More knowledge sharing and team learning.	62	80	18
Increased need for content curation.	46	61,5	16

5.4 Trend practices in Dutch based multinational organizations

Trend practices were measured by means of four variables: Investments in terms of time and money, actions and the realization of trends, delivery methods and key challenges. The results of the performed analysis is described below.

Investments in the eight trends. In the survey organizations were asked to indicate their top five investments in emerging trends in terms of time and money. Points were allocated to the top five trends. The top 1 trend gained 5 points, the top 2 trend gained 4 points, the top 3 trend gained 3 points, the top 4 trend gains 2 points and the top 5 trend gains 1 point. The results in figure 3 present for each trend the percentage of the total available points, e.g. *Learning focuses on increasing business results* had 11 of 104 total points. Organizations invest most in *The workplace becomes the learning environment* and *Strategic talent management becomes essential* (24).
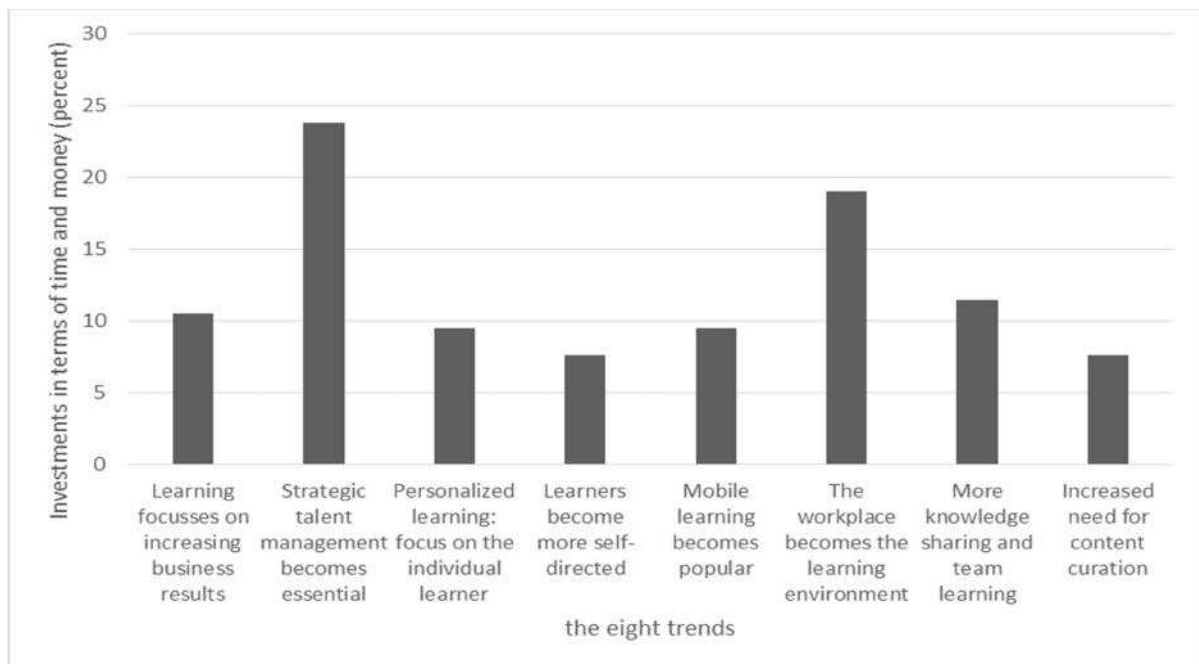

Figure 3: Investments in terms of time and money in trends (N=7)

Actions and the realization of trends. Below the trends are presented separately. The paragraphs will describe current practices regarding each trend. The current practices are citations from the in-depth interviews or the survey. Where applicable, also the instruction method is discussed.

Learning focuses on increasing business results. Organizations increasingly have strategic projects and align their learning offering with the business strategy and goals. As it is hard to measure an actual return on investment (ROI), organizations mainly evaluate whether a learning intervention has influenced job performance, the so-called return on expectation (ROE).

> *"I am not at all sure that we will go overboard on all kinds of measurements of results or return - which is notoriously hard to do well. We will, however, be more explicit in our designs in connecting with our pillar on developing the strength of talent."[1]*

Also, organizations keep an eye on budget and work productivity of employees. Organizations become more and more aware of the factors, which can decrease the costs and increase the value for the learner and the business. Lean management can be found for example in questions like where can learning best be arranged, centralized or decentralized, or what kind of delivery method offers the best learning outcomes related to the learning need.

> *"We must increase the learning outcomes with less resources. More with less."*

---

[1] This and the following highlighted, centered and italicized text fragments are quotes from the interviews and the qualitative part of the surveys.

> *"Business alignment & results: L&D specialists become performance consultants for a business line. More focus on showing the value of learning, measuring business impact and ROI".*

Insight in the administration of data and statistics allows L&D professionals to become aware of inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. In this administration, some organizations are more advanced than others. As a response to the invitation to complete the survey, organizations informed us that retrieving information about L&D budgets, training hours of employees or percentages of used delivery methods was not possible, that it was too much an effort to uncover or that they preferred not to share this data. The seven organizations that did fill out the survey were not able to complete all questions related to the contribution of L&D to business results. Some organizations pointed out that at the moment they are putting their administration in order.

> *"Some organizations are more advanced than others in managing their administration."*

However, learning must serve the business optimally. Learning is a means to generate, improve and innovate business outcome. L&D staff can become close partners with the business and better understand their issues (O'Leonard, 2011). As a result the HRD function in organizations change from not only assessing learning needs, writing development plans, and conducting and evaluating training but also integrating L&D with business strategies, with performance appraisals, with recruitment/selection and with talent management.

> *"Learning must increase job performance and must be as efficient and effective as possible."*

Organizations want to improve their competitive advantage by optimizing all internal processes, so that the best solutions can be offered to a client for a reasonable price. L&D is one of these internal processes and therefore needs to be optimized to become more relevant, efficient and effective.

> *"We need employees fit for their job. Only then they can contribute to the business results."*

Strategic talent management becomes essential. Organizations monitor their talents, thus finding the right employee for the right project, assignment or vacancy. L&D departments suggest to take advantage of employees' strengths and embrace and support their personal competencies and interests. As a consequence employees broaden or specialize their field of expertise and improve their learning capability.

> *"We are stimulating our professionals to think of what they want to learn and to what extent they can integrate this in their daily work."*
>
> *"Learning to stay fit for position: Because of the rapid changes, we want our employees to be aware of their talent, their power, their ambitions, so they adapt to changing circumstances, years before changing becomes crucial. "*

Even if their current job is no longer available, employees are capable of learning and are required to grow into a new position, they are *"employable"*. Organizations also would like and stimulate employees to move in the organization, vertically and horizontally.

> *"We want to bind employees to our organization because specialized and qualified people are rare in the market. We think we can bind employees by challenging them. Also, we*

> *want to prepare employees to move in our organization instead of hiring people from outside the organization as soon as a position was vacant."*

In the sample of this research, organizations indicated not having an overview of the capabilities and interests of their employees. It is important that L&D departments are aware of the next move of employees because then L&D departments can prepare employees for their next steps.

> *"In the last years we were not able to fill critical positions with sufficient quality. The best of the rest."*

Personalized learning: focus on the individual learner. In non-formal learning methods, a more personalized approach is possible. Learners are not running through a curriculum where most of the content is already known, but where needs and abilities can be matched. Another opportunity is just-in-time information, for example in performance support. The combination of workplace learning and just-in-time learning makes learning more efficient because meaning is directly added to the learning content (application and practice happen hand in hand with learning).

> *"Just for me, just enough, just in time! This is important because change is not a one-time thing, but a continuous process. We need to change fast. Also, this principle increases efficiency."*

> *"Just in time learning and learning on the job, makes learning more efficient and meets the individual goals of the learner."*

Personalized learning in organizations is often interpreted as designing an intervention that fits to exactly that individual's needs. Not many organizations find this effective.

Sometimes personalized learning is associated with registering employees for taking a course to get their certification, for example when an expert has to earn the license to operate. A simple, but effective way, which organizations initiate is personal coaching. Also, self-directed learning or someone monitoring self-directed learning plans, paths and goals is regarded as personal approach.

> *"This trend is key in our vision on learning & development, and we will innovate our offering to bring it more in line with this"*

> *"There is room for personal learning goals and interventions in our team programs. We also have online interventions where the learners only need to follow what they are not capable of based on a test in advance."*

Need for self-directed learners: Learners become more self-directed. It is noticeable that organizations are in transformation. Self-directed learning is important to many organizations, but at the same time they do not recognize it, nor do they invest in it. It is striking that despite the great importance of self-directed learning, organizations invest least in this trend. Organizations want to be able to continuously improve and transform themselves to adjust to customer needs and learning is key to achieve this. Employees must act proactively to achieve these needs and therefore must be able to learn in a self-directed manner.

> *"Organizations develop and transform themselves and learning is a part in this, being open to new things, continuous improvement and learning must become a habit."*

> *"Employees need a learning capability. This means that employees are capable of developing themselves and others, which allows them to cope with big changes and to innovate."*

The fast and continuously changing environment requests the workforce to adapt fast and gain a learning capability, which allows employees to be able to change roles based on the recent needs of the organization by educating themselves. Examples from the interviews for changing roles in organizations are that employees need to transform their behaviour: from product-orientation to client- and solution-orientation, from a control-function to an advisor-function, from an operator to a controller.

> *"People are waiting to be taken care of. To make the most of it, people must stand up, communicate their talent and take action themselves."*

> *"From push to pull."*

During the interviews it also became clear that employees who are not able to adapt to the changing circumstances and are not arranging their own learning, risk their employability and might no longer be needed in the organization because there is no longer a position that fits their capabilities.

> *"Because of constant reorganizations, employees realize that they should have developed."*

The need for people to stay up-to-date can be shaped by employees identifying and addressing their own learning needs. Ellinger (2004) provides a 13 step plan that represented key decision making points, which employees can use to adapt self-planned learning. In order to use learning optimally to improve the business, employees must become eager to learn more about their specialization or to broaden their field of expertise.

Besides, exercising self-direction inevitably requires certain conditions to be in place regarding access to resources, conditions that are essentially political in nature (e.g. budget). In order to facilitate and motivate self-directed learning, leaders and managers have to support and guide Learning and Development needs and they have to step up as coaches, mentors, learning facilitators and providing multi-source feedback.

The role of management and leaders. Learning organizations assign great responsibility for learning to managers and leaders. But managers and leaders have the responsibility to achieve short-term goals. Learning is a focus on impactful work, development and strategic skill gaps. There is no direct impact on the business results of this year, but it is fundamental for the quality of management and employees which will influence the business results in the future. Therefore, the involvement of managers and leaders in the learning process is a challenge for organizations where time and resources are tailored to the minimum, mostly needed for the primary process. To formally make leaders and management responsible for Learning and Development of employees, it must become a performance target for leadership and needs to be integrated in the performance review.

None of the organizations that participated in this research explicitly stated that they are pleased with all their managers and leaders fulfilling the task of mentoring employees learning processes. In the participating organizations some managers and leaders are doing a good job, and others even hinder self-directed learners by denying development opportunities that e.g., take place during office hours. Managers and leaders who fulfil this task are for example acting as a role model in their own learning behaviour, leaders facilitate learning for their employees. Managers and leaders are officially made responsible for a development task

and make time for succession planning and talent development or they ask the L&D

department to assist with change trajectories.

> *"We believe that we improve our leadership skills by letting our leaders facilitate. This is done in formal programs but also in learn & share sessions."*

> *"Employee development is shared responsibility of the employee, managers, leaders and the L&D department."*

Managers and leaders must allow employees to take time for learning. Moreover, they

must support and encourage learning behaviour. L&D professionals want to integrate learning

in the DNA of the organization and that it is encouraged instead of overshadowed by day-to-

day business. Bersin (Mallon, 2010) has demonstrated that many learning culture success

factors are owned by leadership and management and can only be supported by the L&D

department. Therefore, employee development must be seen as a shared responsibility

between managers, leaders and the L&D department.

Mobile learning becomes popular. Advantage of mobile learning in comparison to

instructor-led training is that employees do not have to be at a certain location, at a certain

time. This saves withdrawal and travel costs. In addition, mobile learning decreases the time

elapsing between learning need and intervention.

Online self-study is the second most used delivery method (see Figure 4). Mobile

learning is often blended with instructor-led training. Organizations use mobile learning for

example for online self-study as preparation for a class. In organizations where not every

employee has access to a laptop, tablet or smartphone from the organization, mobile learning

can only be used for employees who have access. Organizations differ a lot in for how long

online and e-learning is in use. Some organizations are now exploring the opportunities, others

have introduced it longer than a decade ago. However, organizations value mobile learning

most in combination with other learning methods.

> *"In all our learning journeys we are looking for the right blend. We are trying to get as much skills in the classroom. Everything else could be done digital. We are aware of the trend, but real life is still lots of classroom."*

> *"For employees working in stores and call centres is online learning in combination with limited class-room learning is more efficient. Increasingly advanced e-learnings and other online and mobile opportunities are applied."*

Workplace learning is recognized in organizations. A shared view of most L&D

departments is that workplace learning is informal and therefore not formalized (or regarded as

L&D responsibility). Workplace learning happens automatically in organizations by conversing,

for example about subject matters, mistakes or evaluations. L&D staff explained during this

research study that they facilitate workplace learning by creating tools. These tools are based

on concepts and ideas like team evaluation, learning from mistakes, learning from observation,

feedforward, asking feedback, making use of the employee's network to fulfil learning needs or

team reflection, e.g. 'did we achieve what we wanted to achieve'. Also, L&D departments

integrate cases from the workplace in training. In conclusion, workplace learning is in some

cases transformed into non-formal learning activities. Therefore, continuous learning by means

of informal learning methods are the future and need to be embraced.

> *"We are focusing on sharing knowledge and work spot-based training. We want to structure our informal learning processes."*
>
> *"We design interventions according to the principle 70/20/10. We start with using the workplace, then the 20% coaching and for what is left, we arrange formal training."*

At this moment, workplace learning is recognized in organizations but it is not yet consistently supported by the L&D departments. Workplace learning in organizations is often informal and employees are not always aware that it takes place. For the future it is important that L&D professionals investigate the conditions under which workplace learning is practiced well and create these conditions to increase the frequency and consciousness about workplace learning.

The allocation and structuring of work can be crucial to progress in workplace learning: more progress has been reported when the work was difficult or challenging, collaborative, and when there are opportunities for meeting, observing and working alongside those with more expertise (Vaughan, 2008).

More knowledge sharing and team learning. Collaboration/ Feedback is the third most used delivery method. Organizations apply mostly personal forms of knowledge sharing and team learning. For example, lunch and shares, succession sharing and knowledge sessions are organized, also communities of practice (CoP's) are established and of course knowledge is also shared informally. In terms of activities there is an evident overlap with workplace learning e.g., in peer evaluation, dialogue and feedback. Research from Lin (2007) "shows that two individual factors (enjoyment in helping others and knowledge self-efficacy) and one of the organizational factors (top management support) significantly influence knowledge-sharing processes. Also,

employees' willingness to both donate and collect knowledge enable the firm to improve

innovation capability" (Lin, 2007).

> *"If people help each other; everyone improves."*

> *"It is about having a dialogue. You can learn from books alone, but it becomes interesting when you talk about what you learned with a colleague."*

However, some organizations already make use of digital forms of knowledge sharing or even team learning. A simple way to share knowledge is by making use of a Knowledge Management System or the intranet. Most organizations already implemented such an environment. Other examples for digital knowledge sharing are forums where solutions are generated, making short instruction videos for peers about a problem, having a talent finder to connect with colleagues that have a certain expertise or a feedback community for people with the same learning need.

> *"Knowledge management is very important. There is a lot of knowledge in our organization. We have insufficient structures for knowledge management."*

Digital methods of learning are an opportunity for multinationals, as it becomes possible to share knowledge and learn together across countries and time zones. In addition, communities and forums generate a platform for dynamic knowledge that can change permanently and when organized appropriately, is easy to find. A disadvantage of online knowledge sharing is that also outsiders or competitors have access. Organizations are very careful with sharing their knowledge with external parties because they expect that the competitive advantage might vanish. On the other hand, getting feedback from the external environment can incentivize innovation and increase motivation and learning.

Increased need for content curation. Content curation is the trends that gains least attention from organizations in terms of "investment". This is striking because organizations want their employees to become self-directed learners. To practice self-directed learning employees must know what contents, methods and tools are available and how and where to find it. In conclusion, content curation must be seen as a precondition for self-directed learning.

> *"We want to increase content curation. There is so much learning material, but how can we manage this and can we manage it in a way that we can make it available for the organizations that employees can increase their self-directedness."*

Finally, the main task for L&D within organizations is still to produce learning contents and facilitate workshops and training. However, a lot of content is already available both in- and outside organizations. Organizations need sustainable, accessible and value adding learning solutions. With an increasing, more diverse and specialized learning offering, due to the rapid changes in the market, the facilitation of learning is transferred to the business. As the subject matter expertise often sits within the business, the role of L&D then becomes to organize, manage, regulate and enable learning in the business and in that sense support the performance of the organization.

Delivery methods. Another variable measured in the survey is the delivery method. Organizations were asked to select their top three most used delivery methods. Just like for figure 4, points were allocated to the top three trends. The top 1 method gained 3 points, the top 2 method gained 2 points and the top 3 method, 1 point. The results were transformed to a percentage, e.g. Instructor-led training had 19 of 41 total points.
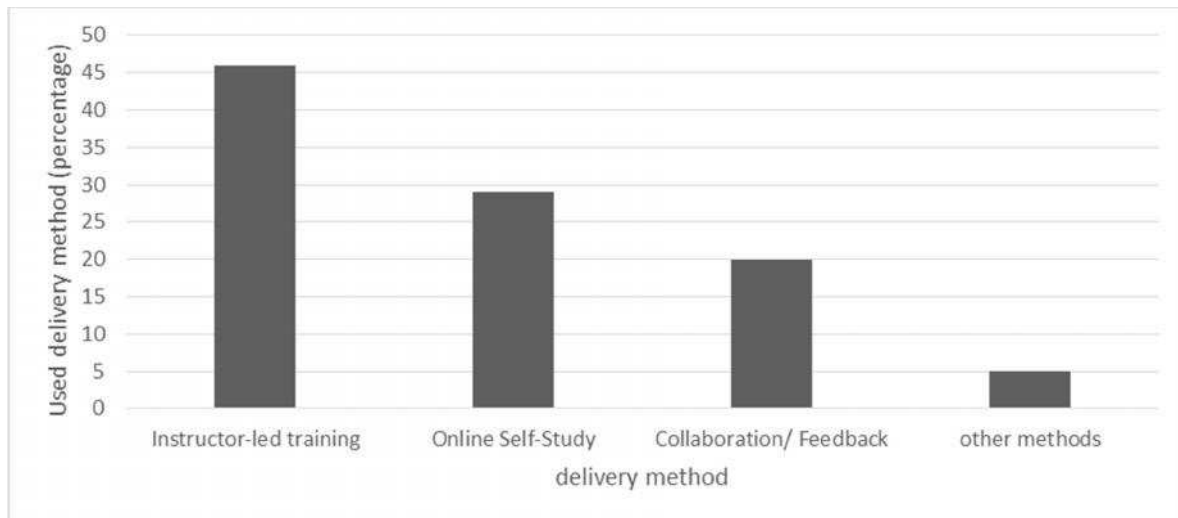
Figure 4: Percentage of used delivery methods (N=7)

Growing need for different learning offering. In line with the eight trends and the most

used delivery method (Instructor-led training) a growing need for a different learning offering

was identified. In organizations there is a common belief that instructor-led training is the

number one solution for all learning needs. This traditional learning method is manifested in

the way people think. When there is a performance issue, people are sent to a training.

> *"I have to improve my administration skills, so I attend a training: like a training is the*
> *solution for all learning needs. In many cases it is about attitude, in the relation with your*
> *supervisor, the motivation and unknowingness."*

Even though L&D departments facilitate more and more diverse methods, the most

recognized delivery method in almost all organizations still is instructor-led training (see Figure

4).

> *"At an early stage we make the decision to develop a training, while there is such a big*
> *reservoir of alternatives we can choose from."*

The growing need for different learning offering is based on the changing environment of organizations and in this new environment the formal learning methods have disadvantages. Instructor-led training and mobile learnings are examples for formal training. They are (1) expensive in acquisition, either the purchase or the production costs, (2) time-consuming to implement, which means that a lot of time is elapsing between identifying a learning need and the intervention.

> *"By means of a formal training we can serve today's learning need in 3 months, but we must serve today's learning needs today."*

Also, formal learning (3) has a low durability because knowledge, laws and methods change continuously and (4) is only profitable if a large number of people have to learn the same content, it is for a broad audience. Formal learning is customizable to a certain degree, which means that mobile learning is supplemented with elements like coaching or if learners can choose elements that fit to their personal learning need.

> *"Formal learning is expensive, slow, impermanent and not customized."*

In order to earn a diploma or certification, however, employees need to attend formal training. In this formal training, people will be educated to obtain a certain level and accomplish a set of learning goals. Formal training is predominantly instructor-led, also in certain e-learning or MOOCS (massive open online courses) a certification can be received. Learning professionals are confident that learning can also or even better be accomplished by other learning methods. But legislation prescribes not only the learning goals, but also the learning method.

> *"There is a growing demand for certification, but the approach is still too much 'old school' training. There is a growing understanding that it is possible to change the way of training when focusing on the end result: the certification."*

> *"We have to test our employees for stuff that is not relevant for practice because otherwise our employees do not have the qualification to do their jobs."*

> *"Technical training to stay fit for the job: Many of our employees need technical training and certification in order to execute their job. Without the certification they are not allowed to operate."*

Nevertheless, the need for changing the approach arises as a result of limited financial and human resources available to organizations. A few organizations already indicated that instructor-led methods are not dominantly used, but that the method is adjusted to the learning need and the desired learning outcome.

> *"We are designing new learning paths with all possible learning interventions in the right place and right time fitting the learning path."*

> *"Non-formal learning can serve today's requirements, but Instructor-led training is still the most used delivery method."*

Alternative methods to instructor-led training have advantages. Methods which can replace or supplement instructor-led training include (1) mobile learning, (2) workplace learning, (3) knowledge sharing and team learning and (4) personalized learning.

Key Challenges. As in organizations nobody talks about issues or problems, everyone talks about challenges and opportunities. Therefore this terminology is adapted from this point on in this paper. L&D departments are challenged to implement new trends. It is a constant

challenge to find practices, to innovate ideas and to spread these into the whole organization.

To do so it is important that the business does not consider learning a burden and additional

target to the primary targets and short term goals. It is a goal for L&D departments to integrate

learning in the business, so that it becomes the shared responsibility of managers and leaders,

the employee and the L&D department (Mallon, 2010).

Trends demand new approaches and new approaches require new ways of thinking of

members of the L&D department. For example, instead of Instructor-led training other

instruction methods must be developed and implemented in the organization.

> *"At an early stage we make the decision to develop a training, while there is such a big*
> *reservoir of alternatives we can choose from."*

Also, interviewees declared that many employees are not aware of the numerous

available development opportunities in their organization. A common assumption of employees

is that learning is related to a personal curriculum that is supplied. But instead, the L&D

department must become a function where they support employees to set and achieve their

own learning goals and specialize in a field that is important to the organization.

5.5 L&D in Dutch based organizations compared to Bersin research

To benchmark the L&D function against other countries, one part of this research was

committed to replicating the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a). Below all results for the Dutch

participants are presented in comparison to the data from Bersin research in the US in 2012

(O'Leonard, 2013a), 2013 (O'Leonard, 2014) and from the UK in 2012 (O'Leonard, 2013b), these

are the most recently published Bersin Corporate Learning factbooks from 2013 (O'Leonard,

2013a) and 2014 (O'Leonard, 2014). The Dutch results are based on a small sample size (N=7). Therefore the results are compared to Bersin research results to verify similarity. However, this is not enough to undisputedly arrive at a conclusion about Dutch multinational organizations. It rather explains the situation in the participating organizations.

Target groups of the L&D departments. The L&D department pays most attention to starters and top talents, managers and leaders. Organizations run induction programs, talent programs for the top 100 or 300, many management development programs and leadership programs. Everyone that does not belong to one of these target groups is often out of range for the L&D department. Especially clerical staff and unskilled labour gain little attention from the L&D department (see Figure 5). Bersin (O'Leonard, 2014) did not research this variable in the same manner, but is supporting these finding. O'Leonard (2014) found that in US organizations leadership development claims 35% of the total L&D budget. Miller (2012) discloses a top 3 of L&D content areas: (1) managerial and supervisory, (2) profession- or industry specific, and (3) processes, procedures and business practices. Therefore Miller's (2012) findings support the results in this study.

> *"We have a talent management program for the young generation. After three or four years it is less structured."*
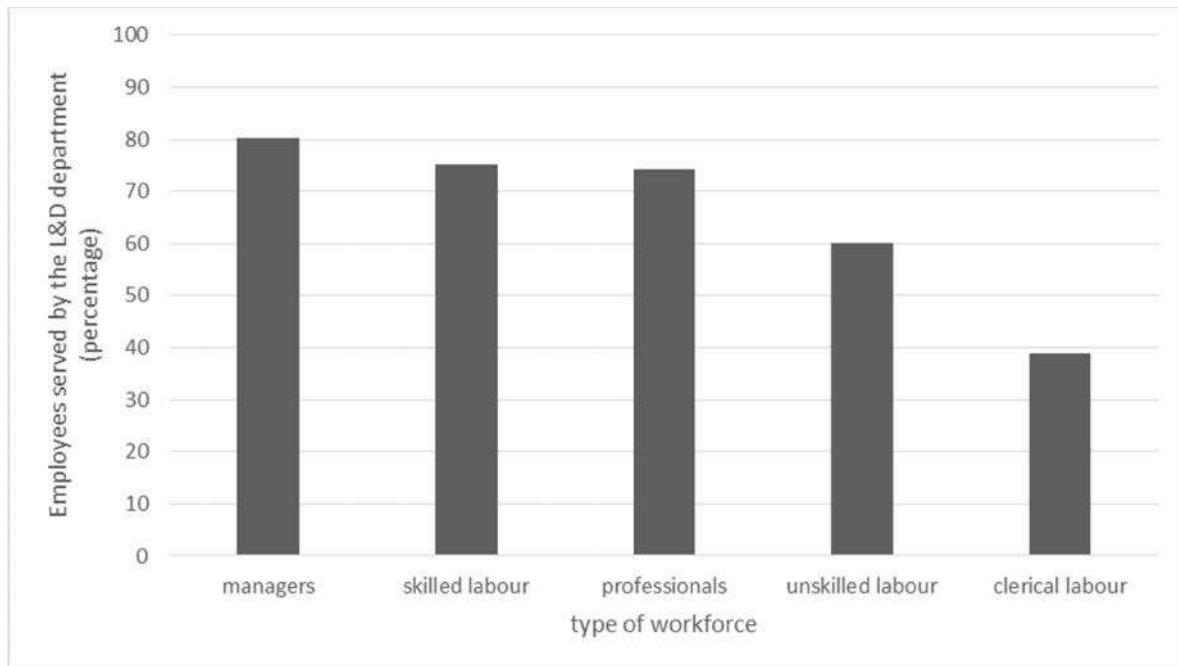
Figure 5: Percentage of employees served by the Dutch L&D department (N=7)

L&D Budget. In comparison to budgets identified in US and UK based organizations (assuming equal data sets), large organizations in the Netherlands spend twice as much on Learning and Development (see Figure 6). For midsized organizations the opposite is identified. Midsized organizations in the Netherlands spend half as much as organizations in the US and the UK. Therefore this research identifies a great difference in budget between mid-size and large Dutch based multinationals.

According to research conducted by Bersin (O'Leonard, 2013a) L&D departments with a higher maturity level[2] have higher spending per learner than L&D departments with a lower

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[2] For more information about L&D maturity levels, see *The High-Impact Learnin Organization Maturity Model*, Bersin & Associates / David Mallon, August 2012. Available to research members at www.bersin.com/library

maturity level. Expecting that organizations providing the data are mature compared to

organizations that were not able to provide data, the results in this research might represent

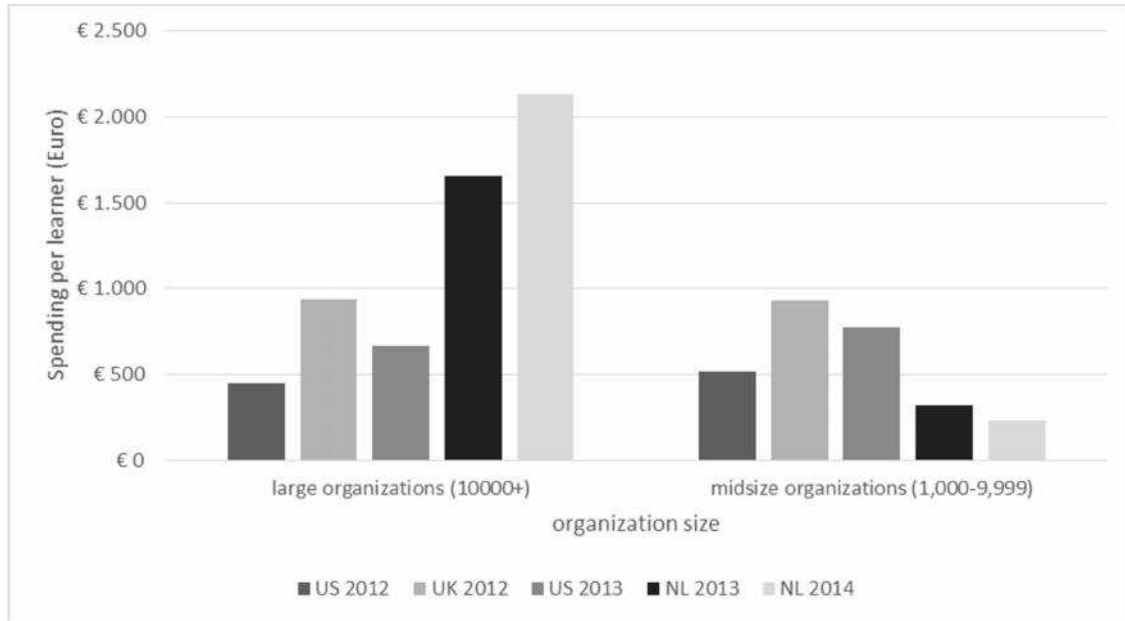more mature organizations and therefore are not representative for the population.

Figure 6: Spending per learner in Euro by organization size in Bersin research (O'Leonard,

2013a, b, 2014) compared to this study, rounded off (N=5)

Training hours per learner. As pointed out earlier, not all organizations that participated

in the survey provided answers to all questions. Only two organizations provided data to the

question related to the training hours per learner. The organizations indicate annual training

hours per learner are 24 hours (large organization; N=1) and 120 hours (midsize organization;

N=1). Comparing these to the Bersin results (see Figure 7), 24 hours is insignificantly higher

than in large organizations in the US and significantly higher than in the UK. 120 hours is about

six times of what is found in midsize organizations in the US or the UK. However, the conclusion

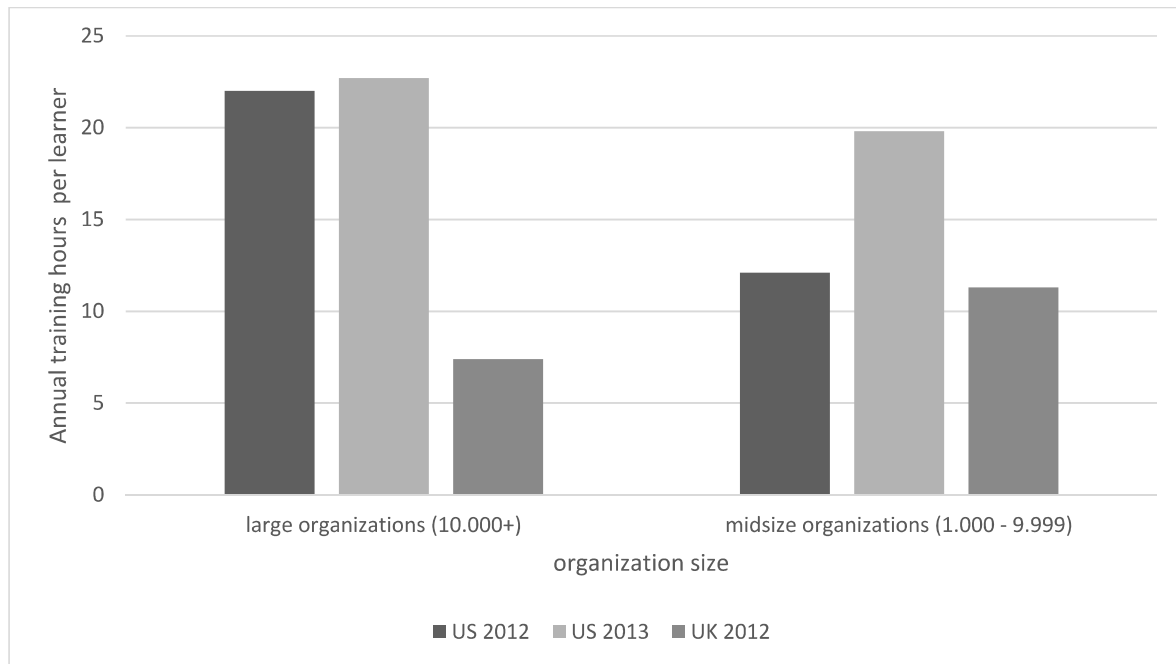must be that participating organizations have limited administration of training hours.

Figure 7: Annual training hours per learner by organization size in Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014).

Training staff per learner ratio. In large organizations a similar training staff to learner ratio compared to US organizations is recognized. In the UK, there is significantly more L&D staff per learner. Figure 8 shows that the mid-sized companies who participated in this research employed less L&D staff compared to US organizations and significantly less L&D staff than UK organizations.
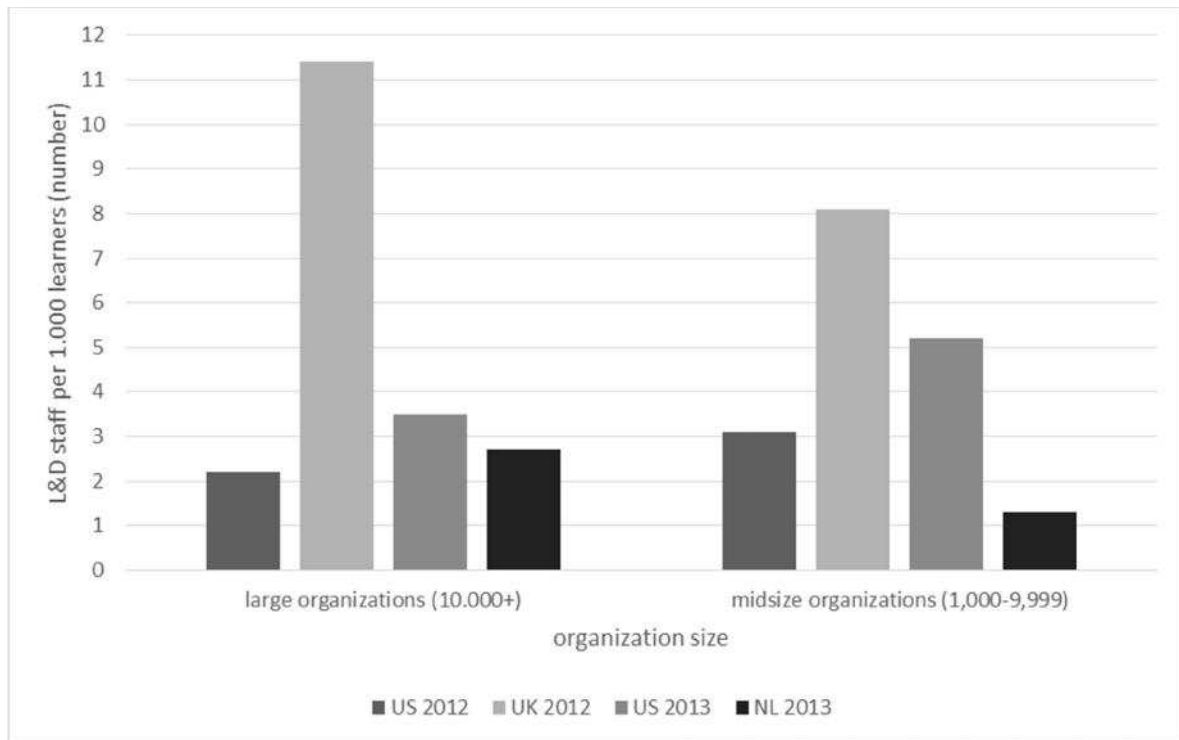
Figure 8: L&D staff per 1.000 learners in Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014) compared to this study by organization size.

Delivery methods. The analysis revealed that Instructor-led training is the most used delivery method, followed by Online Self-Study and Collaboration/ Feedback (see Figure 9). Very few organizations indicate that their most used delivery method is not instructor-led training. They explain that their method is chosen in means of effectiveness of the learning method to the delivered contents.

Comparable distribution of delivery methods compared to the US and the UK were found in the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013 a, b, 2014) for Instructor-led training, online self-study and collaboration/feedback. Virtual instructor-led delivery is the only delivery method that was not identified in the companies that were questioned in this research. Other delivery

methods have in our sample insignificant higher percentage compared to the percentage for
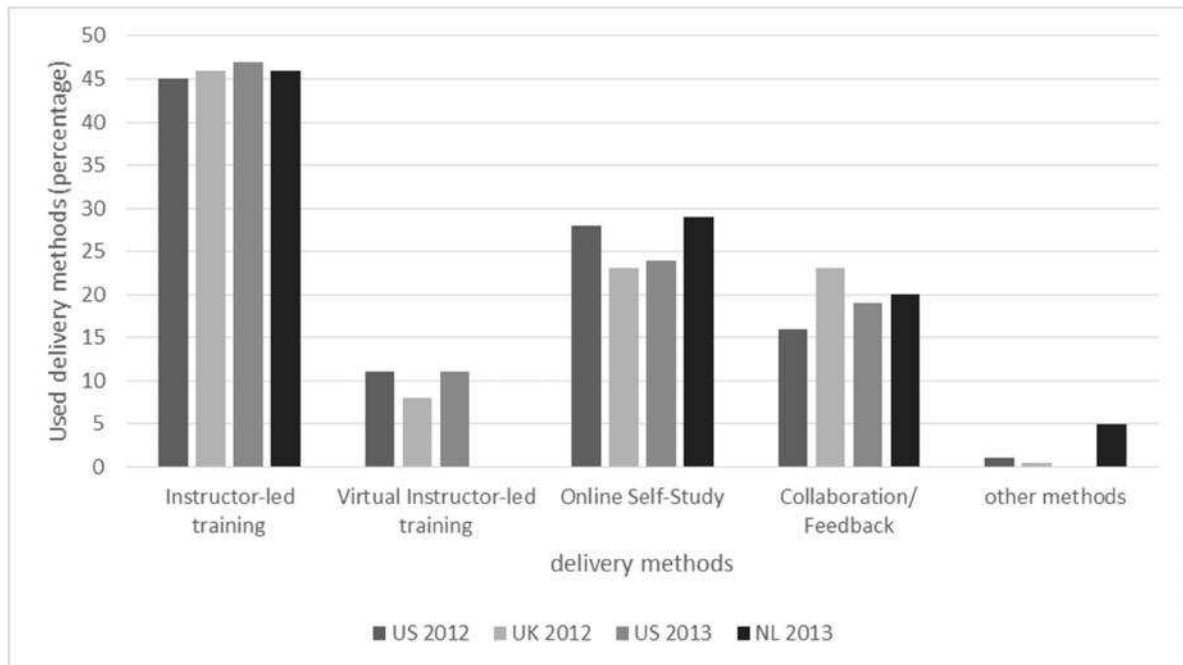
the UK and the US.

Figure 9: Distribution of used delivery methods in Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014)

compared to this study (N=7)

6   Conclusion & Discussion

This research explored and identified current HRD trends in Dutch based multinationals.

Fourteen Dutch based multinationals participated in a survey and interviews. Additionally, this

report provided a comparison to data from Bersin (O'Leonard 2013a+b, 2014). This section will

elaborate on the most important findings of this research, the strength and limitations of the

research and suggestions for future research. Furthermore theoretical and practical

implications will be discussed.

6.1 Trend drivers

The first sub question was: What are trend drivers in Dutch based multinationals. This study shows that literature identifies similar trend drivers compared to the opinions of experts and L&D representatives of Dutch multinationals. Drivers that are identified by all three sources are: the changing environment (globalisation, ICT), becoming more efficient and effective, an employable workforce, performance improvement and innovation. Drivers that were identified by experts and the representatives of organizations are the economy, demographic development and the available labour force. The literature and experts identify that managers and leaders, as well as business strategy and issues (see Paragraph 5.1) influence trend adoption.

In conclusion, the available list of drivers in the literature was extended with the results of this research. However, representatives of the selected organizations tend to describe drivers in terms of goals. This research found three main motivations for introducing or developing the eight trends in the participating organizations: 1) the need for a sustainable employable workforce 2) the changing environment of organizations and 3) the motivation to become more innovative, fast adapting and client oriented. Summing up, organizations want to gain the characteristics and capacities of a learning organization. Similarly, Streumer and Kommers (2012) find that organizations strive to become innovative and want to produce optimal results. Findings from the expert interviews and the participating organizations do not contradict, they rather are formulated from different perspectives: consultancy and business.

6.2 Acknowledgement of HRD trends in the Netherlands

Trends that were identified in the literature (see Paragraph 2.2) were shared and evaluated with L&D consultants from Deloitte and HRD professionals from Dutch based multinationals to further explore how trends from the literature reflect in the Dutch context. It must be noticed that almost all trends that had been identified in the literature are present in the participants' organizations, except for *Shift of employee's job requirements from technical to soft skills*. The four measured variables, identification, recognition, importance and practices, helped to identify eight trends that are currently acknowledged in Dutch multinational organizations: (1) *Learning focusses on increasing business results*, (2) *Strategic talent management becomes essential*, (3), *Personalized learning: focus on the individual learner*, (4) *Learners become more self-directed*, (5) *Mobile learning becomes popular*, (6) *The workplace becomes the learning environment*, (7) *More knowledge sharing and team learning*, (8) *Increased need for content curation*. Practitioners evidently recognize these trends.

Regarding how HRD trends are acknowledged, we observe that the trends *Strategic talent management becomes essential* and *The workplace becomes the learning environment* are most recognized, important and invested in by the participating organizations. However *Learning focusses on increasing business results* is not yet widely recognized and not highly invested in, but seems to be very important to organizations. Therefore it is predicted to gain more attention in the future.

It stands out that the most used delivery method is instructor-led training, but workplace learning gains more and more attention in the L&D departments. This supports

Nijhof's (2004) findings that the Dutch HRD practitioner is or was in 2004 a classical type of trainer, with competences and outputs related to the typical training function. Streumer and Kommers (2012) argue that there will be less emphasis on the traditional training function and learning will be more integrated with work. This is also the goal of the organizations participating in this research. L&D professionals argue that a different learning offering, like mobile learning, workplace learning, personalized learning, knowledge sharing and team learning has advantages compared to traditional formal training methods. Conclusively, the Dutch HRD market is transforming from a classical type of trainer to a divers and work related learning offering.

At this moment, practitioners argue that this changing approach is a challenge. Their approach of finding solutions to learning needs must change. Organizations in this study often refer to the 70/20/10 model: Experience should consist of 70% challenging assignments, 20% other people and 10% programs (McCall, 2010). However, most organizations in this study start with designing and booking courses combined with reading material which refers to the 10%. As many best practices in this research show, L&D professionals that participated in this study have the expertise to develop education that is not instructor-led. The author advises to increase the frequency of these interventions and to provide concrete action plans for employees to facilitate their own and their colleagues learning and development. A concrete example is the 13 step plan that represents key decision making points, which employees can use to adapt self-planned learning by Ellinger (2004). Such action plans must also be created for workplace learning, knowledge sharing and team learning. Furthermore, an important remark is

that that employee willingness to both donate and collect knowledge enable the firm to improve innovation capability (Lin, 2007).

Yet, changing the approach requires a transformation in organizations. Such transformation requires commitment of different players. Leaders, managers and the L&D department are mainly responsible to bring about changes in the field of HRD (Mallon, 2010). Therefore three key challenges were identified: (1) the need for managers and leaders to become more involved in the learning paths of their employees, (2) as a learning and development team; adapting new roles and leaving old habits behind and (3) promotion of learning opportunities, more specifically those in charge need to promote which contents are available and explain how to find them, so all employees can use the available learning offering.

Findings show many similarities between the results of this research and prior research of HRD trends in the Dutch context. Similar to the study by Streumer and Kommers (2012), also this research identified a great variety in the degree to which organizations recognize trends. Organizations have very different initiatives, projects and interventions that relate to the different trends. Kwakman and Streumer (2002) explain this phenomenon by arguing that "similar developments going on outside organisations do influence HRD and HRD responses within organisations, but they do not automatically lead to the same types of responses" (p. 374).

Nijhof (2004) disclosed for the period from 1993 to 1999 that the HRD role is not changing. This raises the question: Is the HRD function in the Netherlands moving forward? In this study similar trends were found compared to the studies of Nijhof and de Rijk (1997),

Nijhof (2004) and Kwakman and Streumer (2002). This would imply that the HRD function is not

changing. An explanation for a not changing HRD function could be that "fashionable concepts

are commonly characterized by a certain degree of conceptual ambiguity and formulated in

highly general terms" (Benders and van Veen, 2001 in Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2010, p. 133).

Therefore trends are always interpreted in the contemporary context. However, many

preceding studies focus on predicting future trends and developments in the field of HRD. As

this study shows similarities to prior research, it is possible that the preceding research studies

have influenced the current practices of organizations. Furthermore, the results of the in-depth

interviews and the survey indicate that organizations do create and implement interventions

related to these trends and still evaluate and improve. As concluded above, this research

identifies that the HRD function in the Netherlands is in transformation.

6.3 Comparison to Bersin

        This study collected data which is comparable to the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a)

and explored differences in spending on HRD activities between Dutch based multinationals

and United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) based organizations. This research focused on

data from multinationals based in the Netherlands; the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a,

2013b, 2014) focused on organizations within the US and the UK. The results of the

participating Dutch based organizations indicate similarities and differences to both UK and US

organizations. In this comparison similar results among the three countries, US, UK and the

Netherlands were found with respect to target groups, spending, and delivery methods.

However, compared to the UK, the Netherlands and also the US have significantly less L&D staff

per learner. O'Leonard (2013b) argues that the difference between the US and the UK is due to

the UK's heavier reliance on instructor-led training. The earlier conclusion that the training function in the Netherlands is dominant would disprove this assumption of O'Leonard (2013b), but still gives no explanation for this finding.

Regarding training hours, it must be pointed out that only two organizations provided data. Therefore Dutch based organizations should improve their administration. Organizations increasing their efforts to relate learning to business results would suggest that L&D departments need a comprehensive administration of the activities they are involved in. We observe that the trend *Focus on increasing business results,* also in the opinion of practitioners, is not yet recognized in organizations. In order to being aware of the extent to which L&D increases business results, L&D departments need an enhanced administration in the near future. However, organizations in this research indicated that enhancing administration already is on their to-do list as a next step.

In the study of Miller (2012) it is identified that high numbers of learning hours are related to high revenue for the top 500 corporations worldwide. This would indicate that organizations with a high number of training hours are wealthy. In this study it is not reflected that higher revenue (and therefore larger organizations) means higher number of training hours. On the contrary, the midsized organization reported three times more learning hours per employee compared to the large company. However, there is no additional data available to explain this controversy.

6.4 Strengths and limitations

Strengths and limitations of this study are briefly discussed in this paragraph. A first strength would be the data-source and method triangulation. Measuring the same variables by different means leads to more credible and valid results. The triangulation is the most valuable validity assurance. For this study, it can be concluded that the data and information provided by the literature, the experts and the representatives of organizations substantiate and complete each other. In paragraph 5 and 6, it becomes clear that regularities among the data-sources were identified for many aspects. Even though the core of this study relies on self-reported data based on experience and personal views, by supplementing with literature, experts and Bersin results (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014), this research utilized various data sources.

Another strength of the course of action in this research is the continuous use of peer debriefing which increases the dialogic reliability. All steps in this research were discussed with HRD practitioners from Deloitte and university professors. All parties supported the chosen approach to the best of their knowledge and skills.

However, there could have been more attention for the validity and reliability. For example the validation of the scale and items in the survey. In this research the validation of the scale and items is merely based on peer debriefing and partly based on the research of O'Leonard (2013). The survey was not tested for validity or reliability, due to the low response rate. An improvement on the analysis of the qualitative data in the surveys and the interviews would be a second coder in order to generate an interrater agreement.

Furthermore, the sample in this study is predominantly related to the Deloitte network, which is a limitation to the external validity. Due to a small sample size and a convenience sampling method it is not possible to assume that the results are generalizable to the larger population of all Dutch based multinational organizations, namely all Dutch based multinational organizations. However, the data that is compared to the results of the Bersin research (O'Leonard, 2013a, b, 2014) indicate that in similar-sized organizations in the US and the UK, there are parallelisms. This and also the similarity to prior research increases the reliability of this study.

6.5 Implications and future research

This research is descriptive and explorative in nature. This approach is chosen because there is only limited prior research available in this specific field and in the Dutch context. Therefore this research has theoretical and practical implications and suggestions for future research.

As pointed out in paragraph 1 the term trend does not refer to a limited period of time and is not defined well. Therefore it will be necessary to establish a more concrete definition of the concept. In the interviews it became clear that trends are assumed to be the 'the latest and greatest' developments of the last months. Trends in this research rather include developments over a period of fifteen years.

This study gives insights in actions and the realization of trends in organizations. This knowledge can help L&D departments to think of new interventions or inspire professionals to

adopt best practices. These examples of practices of trends can also help scholars to review and asses the literature and theoretical studies on their accuracy and practical application.

For the field of HRD this study is a starting point to monitor HRD trends in organizations. This report reveals which and how trends are acknowledged in organizations. This can assist organizations finding a clear focus on their L&D policy and prioritizing. Observing and learning from developments in organizations will lead to insights in HRD trends and hopefully towards the prediction of trends based on monitoring the drivers, trends and key challenges. This will result in organizations reacting quickly to changes and becoming a learning organization. Also predicting trends based on organizations characteristics, like operating countries/ country of origin and possible other variables might be possible. For this, more research is needed that identifies organizations characteristics in relation to followed HRD trends.

This research supports organizations to explore the five steps that Phillips (1999) describes to use trend data effectively: (1) being aware of distinct trends that will have impact on the L&D function, (2) examine drivers and understand issues, (3) explore potential impact within the organization, (4) make adjustments to the potential impact by reacting to the trend and (5) monitoring the trend and reassess the impact. Step one and two as described by Phillips (1999) have been followed in this research study. Step three and four are organization dependent and therefore need to be attended by the organizations L&D departments. Step five, however, is the task for recommended future research. It can be useful to repeat this research annually, like the investigations of Bersin and the ATD. Monitoring and reacting to trends has an important function in developing an effective training and development function (Phillips, 1999).

In this study, a single point in time is measured. A longitudinal study, or repeating the same study every year, like Bersin and the ATD, can measure changes over time. If this research is repeated, expanding the data gathering period is recommended to increase the number of participants. In this research most response was gained by making use of convenience sampling, professional networking with colleagues and friends. Also, the researcher should invite participants to encourage their network to contribute.

Furthermore, the conclusion of McLean and McLean (2001) that there is a discrepancy between perceptions of HRD in local firms and multinationals can be further investigated for a more detailed framework about the Dutch context. As the Dutch private sector is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) (Roelofsen, Hirscher & van der Lande, 2014), research should also include small organizations or even public organizations. Also these companies could benefit from trend research. Expanding the study could give insights into similarities and differences among organization size, industry and other organization characteristics in the Dutch context. Moreover, HRD trend research should be performed in different countries of Europe, Asia and Africa, as this is rare until this moment.

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Note: The entire research, including appendices can be retrieved (marinastroer@gmail.com).