**The Betrothal Knot – Engaging British University Academic Staff**

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**Abstract**

A number of scholars within the HRD field have begun contributing to engagement literature in the last decade (Shuck & Albornoz, 2008; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Fairlie, 2011) and interest is growing in employee development and management training as well as career development and engagement but no studies have examined how continuous professional development (CPD) and competence frameworks impact engagement. This paper constitutes a systematic literature review to address the Research Question: How does CPD foster employee engagement in professional staff

Given the changes in the education sector in Britain and the current enthusiasm from the HE Academy (HEA) for academic staff to become Teacher Fellows (via the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), it is a pertinent time to consider CPD and employee engagement of British academics. Competency Frameworks and CPD are part of human resource development and so it is hoped that this research will help HRD practitioners working in Universities to better advise on strategic policy and actions on CPD, UKPSF implementation and engagement.

The research therefore proposes to explore British academics’ perception of the UKPSF accreditation process via CPD and its relationship to employee engagement to address the research question.

The review culminates in a proposed conceptual model to take forward into a pilot research study. The proposed model demonstrates a high degree of overlap between the antecedents of competency frameworks and CPD for professionals with identified antecedents of engagement, many of which have been empirically tested (Wollard & Shuck, 2011) and also confirms team antecedents. This overlap shows the evidence of the relationship between CPD and employee engagement and is referred to as professional engagement. This conceptual model specifically links CPD to engagement for academic staff as a profession in Britain (King 2004; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2014).

Key words: CPD, engagement antecedents, competency frameworks, professional staff, academic staff.

**1. Introduction**

Given the changes in the education sector in Britain and the requirement for target numbers of academic staff to become Teacher Fellows (HE Academy, 2014), it is a pertinent time to consider continuous professional development and engagement of British academics. Competency frameworks and continuous professional development are part of HRD in an organisation and so this paper will favour HRD scholars’ contribution to the engagement field.

This paper constitutes a systematic literature review to address the research question on how does continuous professional development (CPD) foster engagement in professional staff. This question is part of a doctoral thesis which is interested in British academic staffs’ perceptions of the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) accreditation process; and its relationship to engagement.

The paper begins with the changing context of the HE sector and explains key terms in the research question. Seminal studies are referenced alongside the different schools of thought on engagement known as needs-satisfaction, burn-out antithesis, satisfaction-engagement and the multi-dimensional approach.

Findings from previous work by the author on CPD and competency frameworks is briefly reviewed and identifies the key enablers for successful implementation of competency frameworks and professional development interventions.

Various studies have identified drivers of engagement and some of these are reviewed to reveal the significance of HRD practices in enabling engagement. A table of comparisons of drivers for effective CPD and competency framework implementation is compared to engagement antecedents.

The paper concludes with a conceptual model to take forward into a pilot research study.

**2. Recent changes in the HE sector**

Why is engagement of academic staff in British Universities a ‘knotty’ problem? There is a currently much turmoil in the higher education sector leading to an increasing concern about academic staff stress levels and their performance in their role (Kaur et al., 2013; Ryan, 2013). Teaching budgets have been cut by 40% in higher education institutions in England due to government spending cuts in 2010, and tuition fees have risen to £9,000 resulting in redundancies (Graduate Prospects 2014). These changes have introduced competition into the sector in terms of teaching standards, research income (HEFCE, 2014), raising entry qualifications to Doctorate level and professionalization of academic staff through the implementation of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) (HE Academy, 2014; Thornton, 2014). Resulting in increased emphasis on the quality of teaching and student experience. A rise in fees for courses has implications of ‘value for money’ expectations by students as well as National Student Satisfaction surveys affecting expectations. Additionally the University sector has not, so far, had to demonstrate professional standards in the same way that schools and the Further Education sectors have had to over the last few years. (Evans, 2011). Indeed, research has shown that student outcomes are affected by the teacher and that students care about the quality of the teaching they receive (Gibbs 2010). Consequently the HEA, universities, students, parents and the Government are also interested in teaching quality and the necessary development of intellectual capital.

All of these factors could potentially affect academic staffs’ ability to engage (Thornton, 2014). Additionally, there is a dearth of literature, about the concept of employee engagement specifically for academic staff, except two studies in South Africa (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006), ), one on connected concepts of academic job satisfactions (Kinman, 2003) and another on how job demands and resources predicts psychological strain and commitment in Australian University academics (Boyd et al., 2011). However, no studies have been conducted on British university academics and engagement

**3. Key lessons when implementing continuous professional development interventions and competency frameworks**

Standards frameworks have become part of professional life which originally started through guilds in the middle ages (Grafe & Gelderblom, 2010) who were motivated to protect and promote their profession. Professional bodies have also supported professional standards (CIPD, 2014; HEA, 2013) to enhance and protect the status of their profession. In relation to developing Higher Education programmes to develop competence, Lester, (2009) define capability as “conventional competence – academic ability, discipline-based knowledge and where appropriate occupational or professional competence”.

Kelchtermans (2004, p220) defines CPD as a “learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context (in both time and space) and eventually leading to changes in teachers’ professional practice (actions) and in their thinking about practice”. This definition is drawn from three strands of literature which helps in understanding the interactionist nature of CPD. (Tang & Choi (2009), namely literature on teachers’ development of knowledge and skills, the ecological approach to teacher development and the biographical approach (Tang & Choi, 2009). Teacher professional development can be conceptualised as development of knowledge and skills. The domains of this knowledge are identified by “Shulman (1986, 1987) as content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical grounds” (Tang & Choi, 2009 p2).

Taking account of these three strands, Berliner (1994) explains increases in professional knowledge as levels of professional competence progressing through stages of development. Putnam and Borko, (1997) emphasize the situated, social and distributed nature of knowledge. The situated nature of knowledge assumes that knowledge cannot be separated from the contexts in which it develops. Therefore, as it is constructed in situ, it implies that social interaction with others, who have different perspectives to offer, is necessary (Putnam and Borko, 1997). The ecological approach includes context as part of teacher professional development. Bottery, (2006) refers to meso, macro and global contexts. The meso context refers to the school organisation level. If the working environment is a learning environment this symbiotic relationship creates the conditions for professional development (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The conditions necessary in the school include resources, time and structural conditions as well as a supportive culture and ethos (Tang & Choi, 2009). The macro level refers to Education policy. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, (1999) believe that coherence of policy and a policy infrastructure that creates learning opportunities in professional communities empowers teachers to develop. The policies of an education system are affected by ‘‘the unique and dynamically changing sets of circumstances – political, economic, social, cultural, historical, professional and technical – in that system’’ (Bolam and McMahon, 2004, p35). Bottery, (2006) proposes that economic globalization has a powerful effect on the practice of public sectors, including education. Taking account of these three strands, “the examination of teacher professional development involves understanding how teachers make sense of self as a person and a teacher and how the context of development (both in time and space) is mediated through interactive processes of interpretation and meaning.” (Tang & Choi, 2009 p3).

UKPSF is a competency framework envisioned to guide and plan CPD and promote professionalism (HEA, 2012). This initiative is still in its infancy and so there are few studies on how it may or may not foster engagement. However, Thornton, (2014) and Rousse & Wood, (2013) have reported on situations where we can learn from staff reactions following recognition. Consequently, in reading for the research question posed in this paper a wider sphere of literature has been accessed concentrating on how CPD and competency frameworks have been designed and implemented in various professional contexts. A number of aspects were found to be relevant for success (Kershaw-Solomon, 2014). These are summarised under the following headings: context, change management, culture and the role of the manager; effects on practice and peer relationships; professional development and identity; the importance of context in the development of professional competence.

**3.1 Professional Context, Change Management, Culture and the Role of the Manager**

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada introduced an initiative referred to as CanMEDS at the beginning of the 1990s. It is “a national, needs based, outcome oriented, competency framework” (Frank & Danoff, 2007, p 642). It was developed in response to calls for accountability for the health professions. This development has parallels to Higher Education in the UK at the present time as Universities are being asked to be more accountable for results. Following implementation, the authors recommended, after 11 years of experience of implementation, that effective change management strategies should be employed. They considered outcomes-based education as a paradigm shift and so implementers’ need to be aware of medicine’s culture. It is critical to support front line teachers, researchers and educational leaders (Frank & Danoff, 2007). Further evidence of professional culture is provided by Rouse & Wood, (2012) at the University of York St John found that staff perceptions of professional development emphasised the importance of new staff being induced into academic culture.

The University of Huddersfield is the first UK HE Institution to gain 100% recognition for UKPSF. Their approach used an inclusive process based on effective change management principles to formulate the strategy, consulted with relevant stakeholders which included senior management and staff groups. Support was also provided to staff in terms of recognition fees paid by the University and provision of writing workshops “where staff came… and worked with facilitators who could offer feedback on drafts of reflective accounts” (Thornton, 2014, p231).

The role of managers was mentioned in some studies, for example, the study which looked into power inequalities in the assessment of nursing competency with agency nurses in Australia (Cusack, 2010) emphasized how influential managers are in affecting the culture of the work environment. Hennerby & Joyce’s study (2011) of agency nursing staff in Australia, identified the important role of managers as champions of the change.

**3.2 Professional development and identity and peer relationships**

Peer relationships came out as significant based on Thornton’s (2014) conclusions from the case study at Huddersfield University:

* Staff recognized the importance of sharing with peers as part of a ‘communities of practice’ approach to teaching excellence despite the leadership for the initiative coming from senior management in the University
* A small but significant number of staff, who were confident in their own capacity to develop and were sceptical of the initiative, still applied to get accredited

The study conducted by Rouse & Wood, (2012) exploring the impact of the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice (PCAP) on professional development at the University of York St John, used a qualitative approach. The research was interested in how participation in the PCAP had influenced academic staff personally and professionally. Attainment of this qualification provides automatic Teacher Fellow accreditation to the UKPSF.

Staff felt that the influence they gained came from practical knowledge and understanding, reflective practitioner experience and affirmation of their academic identity.

Rouse & Wood, (2012) were also able to identify a link between developing professional identity and the social interaction with other participants on the course in line with Wenger et al., (1998, p 4) ‘communities of practice’ as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise… by interacting on an ongoing basis. Although these findings do not just stem from UKPSF recognition, they include the professional development of the PCAP course. In Thornton’s study (2014) during implementation, members of staff were supported with facilitators, and yet staff sought support mostly from peers during the process indicating the importance of relationships with peers.

**3.3 The importance of context or situation in the development of professional competence**

Some models of professional competence development have come from cognitive psychology (Billett, 2001; Sternberg & Ben-Zeev, 2001; Sternberg et al., 2000) and all have fixed sequences of stages representing progression to higher levels of knowledge and skills acquisition from novice to expert. They assume that professional skill is a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. These attributes are often described without a context or situation. In other words we could list the attributes of a good teacher but would a teacher who possessed these attributes be equally as good in a comprehensive school and a public school? This set of models have been challenged by a number of researchers (Dall’Alba, 2002, 2004, 2006; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Dreyfus, 2002; Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 1996; Lave, 1993; Sandberg, 1994, 2000, 2001; Sandberg & Pinnington, 2006; Schön, 1983, 1987) but most particularly by Dreyfus & Dreyfus, (1986) who claim that as expertise increased, learners are able to exercise judgement rather than be totally ‘following the rule book’. Dreyfus & Dreyfus also subscribe to context dependent skill acquisition and only with practical work experience can higher levels be achieved. Lester, (2009) also mention context and go on to distinguish “mature capability” to include “the ability to engage with and shape contexts so that competence is exercised effectively.” (p10). In order to promote this mature capability Lestor and Chapman, (2008) encourage the use of reflective practice.

**3.4 Staff perceptions of systems and continuous professional development**

At the organizational level, intellectual capital is made up of the aggregate of individual staff talents which has the potential to help organisations compete more effectively. Burr and Girardi, (2002) define intellectual capital as a product of capacity, willingness and opportunity. Capacity equates to competence and willingness to commitment with the additional element of opportunity linked to job control afforded by the work system (Burr & Girardi, 2002).

A study of CPD choices was carried out with academics from Earth Sciences across 31 UK institutions (King 2004). A questionnaire was used to 475 named academics listing a variety of CPD activities and respondents were asked to specify which they had done within the last 12 months. They were also asked to say whether it had been required by the institution and to identify any barriers to carrying it out. The top 3 responses were discussion with colleagues, supporting other colleagues and networking with other institutions. The barriers to doing CPD activities were cited as time, emphasis on research, funding and lack of personal interest and encouragement. One respondent indicated that CPD did not feature for promotion panels, just international research reputation. Other respondents commented that educationalists considered CPD to be courses whereas they found interaction with others and “emulating those I think are effective.” as more useful (King 2004 p 27).

Hobson (2010) researched some secondary sources and proposed some guiding principles to assess new teachers’ fitness to practice:

* The process should be valid and reliable with meaningful outcomes
* The framework for assessment should be linked to development, be supportive with further learning possible from the evaluation process
* The assessment system should also be cost-effective and realistic.
* Teachers should be viewed as responsible professionals and treated courteously during the process.

Crane and co-authors, (2012) inform us that it is important that methods of assessment are seen to be valid, meaningful and fair and that the measures used are transparent. The competency assessment should include skills, behaviours, values and attitudes (Kaslow et al., 2004) and feedback about the assessment and results should be given to the professional (Kaslow et al., 2004). The role of the assessor is considered to be key in terms of being independent and be able to make good judgement based on how the assessment unfolds (Lum, 2013). The assessment system should be supportive and respectful (Hobson, 2010), particularly where staff feel fearful (Cusack, 2010).

In reviewing competency frameworks and professional development, the key drivers for effectiveness arising from the above evidence are:

* the importance of the culture of the organisation, the profession and professional development (Frank & Danoff, (2007); Thornton, (2014); Roberts et al., (2004))
* development of intellectual capital and mature capability (Burr & Girardi, 2002; Lester, 2009)
* use of effective change management strategies (Frank & Danoff, (2007); Thornton, (2014)
* the role of managers in influencing culture and championing change (Cusack, 2010; Hennerby & Joyce, 2011)
* use of rewards and benefits (King, 2004)
* utilising communities of practice (Wenger et al.,1998)
* use of valid, meaningful and fair methods (Crane et al., 2012; Hobson, 2010)
* supportive and respectful relationships with assessors (Hobson, 2010

These factors appear in Table 1 and are contrasted with identified drivers of engagement many of which have been empirically tested

**4. The many interpretations of the construct of engagement**

Engagement has been widely researched in the last 25 years since the term was coined by Kahn, (1990) with the construct of personal engagement. Little agreement has been found amongst various definitions and theories but more recently, Shuck, (2011) provided us with a literature review grouping the work to date into four major theoretical schools of thought on the definitions of engagement. No overarching conceptual model is possible as each emphasises a different aspect. These are the needs-satisfying approach based on Kahn’s, (1990) work; the burn-out- antithesis approach based on Maslach and colleagues (2001) work; the satisfaction –engagement approach (Harter et al., 2002); and the multi-dimensional approach (Saks, 2006). The different schools of thought all have some common ground with the question being addressed and for this reason relevant aspects of each approach are outlined below.

**4.1 The needs-satisfying approach**

Kahn’s, (1990) work is part of this approach stemming from the fact that he based this founding research on authors such as Freud, (1922); Goffman, (1961) and Maslow, (1971) and previous well established constructs such as social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael 1989), job stress theory (Thoits,1991) and job design (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). His 1990 study took place with two different sets of professional people, architects and teachers acting as counsellors at a summer camp. His findings would therefore seem very relevant to this research question about professional staff engagement. Kahn’s premise for the study was “that people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively and emotionally, in work role performances, which has implications for their work and experiences” (1990, p692). Kahn explored the conditions at work in which people engaged or disengaged. He worked on the assumption that the more of their selves that a person puts into their work, the happier they are with their fit to that role and the better their performance of it. He saw the process of being involved and withdrawing at different times, as inevitable. This corresponds to Goffman’s work (1961) who claimed that “people act out momentary attachments and detachments in role performances” (Kahn 1990, p694). Other theorists (Freud, 1922; Goffman, 1961; Bion, 1961; Smith & Berg, 1987) have proposed that people feel ‘inherently ambivalent” (Kahn, 1990, p694) about being members of systems and groups fearing isolation or being swallowed up by those groups and systems. Hence they feel ambivalent and go through changes in behaviour like an ebb and flow which Kahn refers to as personal engagement and personal disengagement. (Kahn, 1990).

Through his work, Kahn found that certain conditions influenced people to engage or disengage at various times which he named meaningfulness, safety and availability. In unison, the 3 conditions shaped how people inhabited their roles. He concluded that individuals as members of organisations “seemed to unconsciously ask themselves three questions in each situation and to personally engage or disengage depending on the answers. The questions were: (1) how meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? (2) How safe is it to do so? And (3) How available am I to do so?” (p703). Kahn saw these questions as related to any contract in the sense of benefits, guarantees and resources available to them respectively. Kahn also concluded that each of the three conditions was shaped by particular influences. “Meaningfulness was associated with work elements that created incentives or disincentives to personally engage” (Kahn, 1990, p703). During this process “employees added value and significance to the work they were doing as well as received feedback about their value and significance to an organisation” (Shuck, 2011., p308). “Psychological safety was associated with elements of social systems that created more or less nonthreatening, predictable and consistent social situations in which to engage. Psychological availability was associated with individual distractions that preoccupied people to various degrees and left more or fewer resources with which to engage in role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p703). Resources could be tangible such as budget or supplies to do the job or intangible such as opportunities for learning and skill development (Czarnowsky, 2008). Some researchers label this waxing and waning of engagement levels as affective shift (Sonnentag, et al., 2010).

**4.2 Burn-out Antithesis Approach**

The Burn-out Antithesis approach arose from the field of Psychology and focussed on

professionals working in stressful situations such as medicine. Related to this approach is the

JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) that considers personal growth, learning and

development as a job resource. Rothmann & Jordaan, (2006) investigated work engagement

of academics in the South African HE sector and considered the impact of job demands and

job resources on their work engagement. Necessary resources and perceived environment

were identified as two conditions required for academics to be engaged and willing to invest

in their jobs. Job resources were organisational support, growth opportunities, advancement

opportunities and social support. The strongest relationship amongst resources was growth

opportunities as these affect the psychological meaningfulness attributed to jobs. “Work

engagement decreases if academics experience less variety, learning opportunities and

autonomy” Rothmann & Jordaan, (2006, p 95). Additionally, the environment needs to enable

academics to utilise their abilities and satisfy their needs.

**4.3 Satisfaction-Engagement Approach**

The Satisfaction-Engagement approach is more closely aligned to positive psychology and considers engagement from the employee’s perspective and since UKPSF recognition is an individual process, this would seem to be relevant. Researchers in this area have demonstrated the importance of the role of the manager and management practices in influencing engagement (Luthans & Petersen, 2002; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006) which was also part of the antecedents for the effectiveness of implementing competency frameworks (Cusack, 2010).

**4.4 Multidimensional approach**

This approach defines engagement as separate states: organisational engagement and job engagement. Saks, (2006) proposed that engagement developed through a social exchange model. Social exchange theory argues that relationships at work depend on trust, loyalty and mutual commitments which evolve over time and work on the basis of quid pro quo or “a fair days work for a fair days reward” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Saks, (2006) sees engagement as a means for the employee to give “their quid”.

Saks, (2006) work with students at a Canadian university was significant in identifying antecedents such as supportive climate, job characteristics and fairness as influencing the development of engagement and that also engagement mediated the relationship between antecedents and outcomes. “Saks viewed the development of engagement as absorption of a person’s resources into the work they performed” (Shuck, 2011 p315). All of the above mentioned theorists including Saks, (2006) claim that in order for absorption to be possible, the individual employee must have at their disposal physical, emotional and psychological resources to complete their work otherwise disengagement will occur (Maslach et al., 2001). Macey & Schneider, (2008) additionally claim that each proceeding state, cognitive-emotional-behavioural build on each other and lead to full engagement. In 2010 Shuck & Wollard defined “employee engagement specifically for the field of HRD as a cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” Shuck, (2011 p 316). The multidimensional approach is often cited and used as a framework for emerging engagement models (Shuck, 2011).

To conclude, Shuck, (2011, p323) tells us that “the concept (of engagement) remains in a state of evolution” and by 2013 Guest tells us that “Engagement has been ‘fixed’, in the sense that it is now an established term in both managerial and academic discourses, and appears unlikely to be abandoned as a fad” (Quoted in Truss et al 2013, p231)

To summarise on the four approaches, Shuck, (2011, p 318) claims that the above categorisation of schools of thought “provides potential scaffolding (for HRD) towards the development of workspaces that conceptualise more fully how workers relate to their work and provides potential leverage points across the four perspectives for how theory and research can drive practical strategies for reaching employees at different levels of being in work (cognitive, emotional and behaviour).”

**6. HRM/HRD and Engagement**

In the evolution and convolution of research on engagement since 1990, the field of HRM and HRD research on engagement lagged behind the practitioner research. This started to change with the earliest HRD engagement related work published by scholars such as Chalofsky & Krishna, (2009); Shuck & Albornoz, (2008) and Shuck & Wollard, (2009). Since competency frameworks and professional development belong in the field of HRM/HRD within an organisation, this section explores the link between HRM/HRD and engagement.

In 2013, the Special issue of the International Journal of Human Resource Management (Truss et al., 2013) advocates future research on areas not yet answered such as the psychological processes underpinning engagement, and the lived experiences of ‘doing’ engagement and ‘being’ engaged, and the micro- and macro-level processes round the enactment of engagement within organisational settings. (Truss et al., 2013, p 2666). These areas seem relevant to this paper and the research it pre-empts. Studies of particular relevance to professional development are Valentin, (2014); Shuck & Rose, (2013); Fairlie, (2011) and Barkhuizen & Rothmann, (2006) which are presented here.

Valentin (2014) has undertaken research on engagement in the NHS, with a specific focus on HRD using a qualitative approach. She claims that training and employee development are major drivers of engagement and states: “Relevant engagement practices range from supporting individual personal and professional development; support for staff to gain professional qualifications; skills development; management development programmes; induction programmes; work shadowing, job rotation and secondments; professional development portfolios and career planning; supporting communities of practice; formal training and on-the-job learning” Valentin, 2014, p4). She used a social constructionist approach exploring the way people ‘make sense of the world’. Three key themes emerged, one of which was learning and development. Staff agreed that the factors contributing to engagement included some related to HRD: open, two-way communication; engaging leadership styles; career development and training; coaching and mentoring; supportive work colleagues. The role of managers in creating a climate for engagement was considered important by respondents.

In general, respondents were enthusiastic about opportunities to train and share knowledge and experience but some barriers were identified. These included: “issues of time and resources; relevance of training; dislike of on-line delivery; opportunities for professional development; lack of support from managers; lack of recognition for undertaking training; and lack of opportunities to practice skills in the workplace” (Valentin, 2014, p9-10).

A web based survey was carried out with 574 employed North Americans to explore one aspect of HRD practices by studying the value of meaningful work (Fairlie, 2011). A comparison was made between meaningful work characteristics and other work characteristics as predictors of employee engagement, burnout, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover cognitions. Fairlie claims that meaningful work is linked to human development through self-actualisation and social impact and so it provides an opportunity to organisations to increase employee engagement. Ryff, 2000, p132) describes meaning as “life meaning, purpose and coherence”. Whilst Fairlie, (2011, p509) pulls together a number of common dimensions of meaning and these include “having a purpose…. challenge, achievement, competence mastery, commitment, engagement…growth and fulfilment.” He claims that “human beings seem to have a need to transform themselves” to achieve an end state. He therefore claims that “development would seem to be central to the concept of meaning” and so HRD professionals can contribute to increasing engagement through meaningful work. Meaningful work has overtones of Maslow’s, (1965) & Alderfer’s, (1972) contributions regarding work that encourages self-actualization and the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham,1975). More recently, Kahn, (1990) linked meaningfulness and engagement when the “preferred self” is displayed at work, rather than the “pseudo-self”. Fairlie, (2011, p 517) concludes that “The current results suggest that self-actualizing work, realizing one’s life purpose, values, and goals through work, having a social impact through work, feelings of personal accomplishment, and believing in one’s highest career advancement within one’s organization are overlooked sources of engagement and work adjustment.”

Shuck & Rose, (2013) were interested in their research on conditions that nurture performance rather than leveraging outcomes. They chose to reframe “engagement within the context of meaning and purpose” exploring “the conditions that cultivate the development of engagement” (p 341). Their work nicely builds on Fairlie’s, (2011) work. They propose that “the concurrent expression of cognitive, affective and physical energies into one’s work performance represents the hallmark of engagement in HRD” (Shuck & Rose, 2013, p344), claiming that individuals will construct their own conducive environment and interpret its meaning. They claim that engagement is more than the motivational constructs of commitment and job satisfaction as the employee perspective is added into the mix. Shuck & Rose, (2013, p344) propose that “engagement can be operationalised as a psychological motivational-state variable representing the experience of work through a cognitive- affective lens” (Shuck & Reio, 2011). The cognitive-affective lens used by the individual determines the context of ‘engagement of condition’ and is dependent on their interpretation of meaning and purpose. In the context of meaning, if a learning opportunity is perceived as a meaningful experience as compared to a meaningless one, an individual will devote energy and attention to it. It will take on personal significance. Individuals evaluate, to determine their course of action, based on contribution, influence and reward. Contribution is like a personal return on investment. Individuals will evaluate based on whether their efforts will make a difference or be appreciated and then individuals seek out opportunities to contribute to their work, relationships or life (Chalofsky, 2010; Fairlie, 2011). Personal influence is about believing you can make a difference which is a subjective decision based on values, subjective observations and perceptions. Here individuals are interested in what the impact will be of their actions? Influence involves interactions with others and we engage when we believe our influence matters and we feel safe to be influenced. In the context of purpose, purpose is found when work is made up of meaningful activities but individuals may also construct their own sense of purpose relevant to them. Therefore engagement is driven to some extent by activities and behaviours that have a purpose (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Purpose consists of pressures, demands and intrinsic motivation (Shuck & Rose, 2013). The authors conclude that purpose is the intention to achieve something, and engagement could be the consequence of an evaluation of purpose.

One of the only two studies found on engagement for academics (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, (2006) set out to assess the psychometric properties of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Shaufeli et al., 2002) in South African higher education institutions. The study confirmed the three-factor model of work engagement, Vigour, Dedication and Absorption (Shaufeli et al., 2002) or, in Maslach & Leiter’s, (1997) terms, Energy, Involvement and a Sense of Efficacy. Significant differences in engagement were found for academics with different qualifications and job levels. These researchers also followed the trend of focusing on the optimization of human beings in line with Wright, (2003) who emphasized positive organisational behaviour rather than the traditional focus on psychopathology and illness (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). So rather than considering burnout this study focuses on work engagement. The research also considered differences in older and younger academics and gender in relation to engagement and used a cross sectional survey design with 595 usable questionnaires returned. The measuring instrument was UWES (Shaufeli et al., 2002) and a biographical questionnaire was used to collect biographical data such as gender, age, length of service, qualifications etc. SPSS and structural equation modelling were used to analyse data. Findings showed that academics who held a doctorate were more absorbed in their job than those with a four year or an honours degree. Professors were more dedicated to their work than senior lecturers and more absorbed in their work than junior lecturers and senior lecturers. Rothmann & Barkhuizen, (2006) recommend that higher education institutions pay attention to work engagement, measure it and provide feedback to staff. They advise that work engagement is promoted by providing resources in the form of assistants and making tasks challenging. They also point out the significant role of leaders to manage and reward performance, to manage fairly, to genuinely problem solve with staff, coach staff and talk to staff about their professional and career development. Finally they advocate the promotion of work engagement through “stimulating the self-efficacy beliefs of academics through mastery experiences” (Rothmann & Barkhuizen, 2006 p43)

To further establish links between engagement and professional development studies were accessed on a related concept to engagement, commitment.

Jørgensen & Becker, (2015) considered how HR and high commitment management (HCM) practices influence professionals’ commitment to their organization, to their profession or to both organization and profession. It was a qualitative study carried out in three Danish financial investment firms.

An underlying assumption of using high commitment practices is a collective focus where ‘employees are expected to accept the organization’s interests as their own’ (Mossholder, Richardson and Settoon, 2011). In these professional service firms staffing, orientation and training and development practices seemed to primarily influence organizational commitment through employees’ commitment to their profession, It would appear that the HCM practices created a connection between organizational and professional commitment, but these authors claim that potential tensions would still occur if clear routes for professional development were not accessible to the employees. Specifically, their data analysis “suggests that HCM practices, related to recruitment, selection, training and development, influence organizational commitment indirectly via their influence on professional commitment” (Jørgensen & Becker, 2015, p17). However, HCM practices that influence organizational commitment via professional commitment may actually cause the potential for tensions to increase, if they primarily encourage commitment to the profession but allow insufficient opportunities for professional development (Jørgensen & Becker, 2015). This most recent study further corroborates the role of the manager in influencing professional development and the connection between professional development and commitment, a sub-set of employee engagement (Robinson et al., 2004)

**7. Drivers and antecedents**

In considering how to foster engagement, it is informative to explore the conditions that drive engagement or enable it and barriers to making it happen. In exploring staff perceptions of UKPSF recognition and engagement, the recognition process will be an antecedent to engagement. Therefore, in broad terms, the following model applies:



A number of studies have been carried out seeking to explain antecedents so that organisations know where to direct their efforts to achieve an engaged and productive workforce (Anitha, (2014); Macey & Schneider, (2008); Rajagopol & Abraham, (2007); Robinson et al., (2004); Saks, (2006); Wollard & Shuck, (2011).

The most comprehensive HRD literature review of antecedents is presented by Wollard & Shuck, (2011) to identify conceptual and empirically driven antecedents. They identified 41 in total, 23 0f which are empirically driven and 18 are conceptual. They also divided these into 20 individual antecedents and 21 organisational antecedents (Wollard & Shuck, 2011 p433). Individual antecedents are conditions that are believed to fundamentally affect individual employee engagement. Organisational- level antecedents are conditions fundamental to employee engagement at the systemic level (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Their findings, have been incorporated into a table in an attempt to bring together identified antecedents and factors considered important for the design and implementation of competency frameworks and associated CPD. From the list of 20 individual antecedents (Wollard & Shuck, 2011, p433) and 21 organisational antecedents to employee engagement many are strongly linked to findings from success factors for the implementation of Competency frameworks and professional development activities and may be linked across more than one aspect of professional development. Many of these engagement antecedents have been empirically tested as shown in the table below.

**Table 1 – Comparison of professional development and engagement antecedents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Antecedents for effective design & implementation of CFs & CPD**  | **Individual antecedents of EE****(Wollard & Shuck, 2011)** | **Organisational antecedents of EE****(Wollard & Shuck, 2011)** |
| Working within the culture of the organization (Frank & Danoff, 2007) |  | -Authentic corporate culture\*-Mission & Vision-Supportive organizational culture\*-Perception of workplace safety\* |
| Embedding a culture of professional development (Thornton 2014) and competence (Roberts et al., 2005) | -Link individual and organizational goals\* | -Supportive organizational culture\*-Perception of workplace safety\* |
| Development of intellectual capital (Burr & Girardi, 2002) for organisational success |  | -Authentic corporate culture\*-Mission & Vision-Supportive organizational culture\* |
| Professional development to build intellectual capacity requires capacity, willingness and opportunity (Burr & Girardi, 2002) | -Absorption\*-Feelings of choice and control-Willingness to direct personal energies |  |
| “Mature capability” is “the ability to engage with and shape contexts so that competence is exercised effectively” (Lester, 2009); “experiential learning to gain the capacity to respond intuitively to complex situations” (Crane et al.,2012 p810). Understanding “of and in practice”….integrates knowing, acting and being” Dall ‘Alba and Sandberg, 2006) | -Feelings of choice and control-Absorption\*-Curiosity-Dedication\*-Vigour\*-Willingness to direct personal energies | -Level of task challenge\*-Talent management-Opportunities for learning |
| Role of managers in influencing the culture (Cusack, 2010) and championing change (Hennerby & Joyce, 2011) | -Perceived organizational support\* | -Leadership-Manager expectations\*-Manager self-efficacy\*-Perception of workplace safety\* |
| Effective change management strategies | -Feelings of choice and control-Perceived organisational support | -Supportive organizational culture\*-Perception of workplace safety\*-Leadership-Manager expectations\* |
| Rewards and benefits such as encouragement , promotion, status |  | -Hygiene factors-Rewards\*-Encouragement-Feedback |
| Utilising communities of practice (Wenger et al., 1998) |  |   |
| Valid , meaningful & fair methods (Crane et al., 2012; Hobson, 2010) | -Involvement in meaningful work\* |  |
| Supportive & respectful relationship with assessor (Hobson, 2010) |  | Supportive organizational climate\*Feedback |
| Resources – time and priorities (King 2004) | -Available to engage-Absorption\*-Work/life balance\*-Value congruence\* |  |

\*Denotes empirically researched antecedent

**8. Discussion and proposed conceptual model**

The following conceptual model is proposed based on the studies reviewed on continuous professional development and competency frameworks. The following discussion explains the proposed model in the light of these findings.

**Fig 1. The proposed conceptual model on professional engagement**



As we have learned from the different strands of literature on CPD (Tang & Choi, 2009), the ecological approach (Bottery, 2006) features in the model as the macro environment which in this case refers to the British Education policy, HEFCE and HEA requirements for example and other relevant stakeholders external to the organisation. The global level (Bottery, 2006) although not featured in the model could influence the way professions are viewed in a particular country and consequently their status. The meso level (Bottery, 2006) is presented here as the University level or the organisation level. Tang & Choi include resources, time, structural conditions as well as a supportive culture and ethos at the meso level. According to the findings of this research paper these aspects tie well to OE antecedents such as authentic and supportive organisational culture, mission and vision, leadership and talent management.

It is interesting to see the amount of similarity between the drivers of effective CPD initiatives and the implementation of competency frameworks in different professional arenas and the identified antecedents of employee engagement (See Table 1).

For the purposes of the following discussion, the CPD/ competency framework drivers from Table 1 will be referred to as CPD/CF drivers and the antecedents of organisation engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011) as OE and individual engagement as IE. A new category of antecedent is proposed in this context of development of professionals, team engagement (TE). Although the next section draws together professional development with all three types of engagement, in some cases the antecedent links to more than one type of engagement as illustrated in Table 1. The model indicates this through the blue arrows. At this point it is not known what combination of antecedents will bring about engagement and whether, for example, a professional employee can be engaged at the individual level and not the team level or any combination of the 3 levels and whether this will result in an engaged or disengaged professional. Consequently, the engagement part of the model is drawn with a number of arrows to indicate a dynamic process that can be further investigated.

**Professional development and organisation engagement**

Context, culture and climate (CF/CPD) are important drivers of effective implementation of CFs such as CANMEDS (Frank & Danoff, 2007), the implementation of UKPSF at the University of Huddersfield (Thornton, 2014) and links to Wollard & Shuck, (2011) OE antecedents such as authentic and supportive culture. Perception of workplace safety (OE) is connected to Kahn’s (1990) criteria for individual decisions on whether to take part in something depending on the individual’s assessment of safety connected to the amount of personal and professional risk involved. In other words, if leaders are supportive of professional development and there is an embedded culture in the organisation, perceptions of risk will be lower. From that position individual and organisational goals can be more aligned (IE). Another CF/CPD driver is the development of intellectual capital (Burr & Girardi, 2002) for the future success of the organisation which could be said to link to mission and vision, leadership and supportive organisational climate (OE) all of which will encourage professional development.

Rewards and benefits are considered to be CF/CPD drivers as in linked to benefits of engaging in CPD. Rewards is one of the empirically tested organisational antecedents as well as hygiene factors, encouragement and feedback (OE). The intangible rewards tie into the emotional (Kahn, 1990) domains of engagement and could also link to role of the manager who is likely to be instrumental in affecting both tangible and intangible rewards. Reward also links to social exchange theory of “a fair days work for a fair days reward” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

**Professional development and organisational and individual engagement**

In CF/CPD drivers, the role of the managers is seen as significant in influencing the culture (Cusack, 2010; Luthans & Petersen, 2002; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006) as just outlined and also championing change (Hennerby & Joyce, 2011). If a manager shows little interest in development needs or the success of achieving recognition or a qualification, individual professionals may not feel that professional development is meaningful for them (IE), or the organisation as rewards are not forthcoming in terms of feedback (OE). Some professional development may result in increased status such as senior or principal fellow recognition and this links to hygiene factors and rewards (OE) encouragement and feedback (OE). Since engagement is considered to be cognitive, emotional and then behavioural (Saks, 2006) professionals may consider the tangible benefits of the hygiene factors sufficient to remain with the organisation but will they feel emotionally engaged if that human element of encouragement and feedback (OE) from the manager is missing. Could this tone then be set in work groups by managers, which could also affect the cooperation and encouragement received from peers and therefore lead to an individual feeling disengaged with a knock–on effect to team engagement? During assessment, a supportive and respectful relationship with the assessor (CF/CPD) was considered to be important and this links to a supportive organisational climate (OE). These points also chime with embedding a culture of professional development (Thornton, 2014) which is associated with linking individual and organisational goals (IE)

The desire to reach “mature capability” (Lester, 2009) and “integrate knowing, acting and being” (Dall ‘Alba & Sandberg, 2006) would appear to be an obvious motivator for CPD and this CF/CPD antecedent maps to several individual and organisational antecedents such as curiosity, dedication and vigour (IE). Feelings of choice and control (IE) links because what differentiates a person with a high level of competence is their ability to exercise judgement in their professional context and not just follow the rule book (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Lester, 2009). This CF/CPD antecedent also links to the level of task challenge (OE) and opportunities for learning (OE) and if the organisation spots and manages talent (OE) an individual is likely to want to continually professionally develop and would feel engaged by this.

Effective change management strategies (CF/CPD) is another antecedent that maps to both OE and IE antecedents. These strategies are more likely to be effective if people feel supported (OE) and able to take risks safely (OE). When making changes, people are more likely to feel engaged if clear expectations are communicated (OE) and people receive encouragement and feedback (OE) as they practise new ways of behaving. At the individual level, professionals are more likely to engage in the change if they feel they have a degree of control and choice (IE) and they perceive that they are supported (IE) in embarking on a ‘new world’. Deci & Ryan, (1987) stipulate that a supportive working environment includes concern for employees’ needs and feelings, provides positive feedback and enables employees to develop new skills and solve problems.

**Professional development and team engagement**

This new category of engagement has arisen since “communities of practice” (Wenger et al., 1998) (CPD/CF) has appeared in different guises particularly for two studies of professional development with academics (Thornton, 2014; Rousse & Wood, 20130. The studies emphasize the importance of peer relationships in the development of professionals and the desire by professionals to seek out peers and colleagues for support. This is the only CF/CPD finding that does not map readily to IE and OE antecedents but came out strongly in studies of CPD. Anitha (2014) relates the need for trusting relationships to Kahn’s (1990) idea of wanting to feel safe and meaningfulness gained through relationships. King (2004) also found that academics were drawn to CPD activities that enabled interaction with others and listed these as their top 3 choices for CPD and Valentin, (2014, p10) suggested “the team as a locus of engagement” in her study with medical staff.

**Professional development and individual engagement**

Some theorist have argued that an individual’s decision to engage can be affected by individual distractions in an ebb and flow (Kahn, 1990) or wax and wane pattern referred to as affective shift (Sonnentag et al., 2010) and so we might assume that this would also be true for individual engagement and professional development.

The professionals felt that methods of assessment of competence should be meaningful, valid and fair (Crane et al., 2012; Hobson, 2010) which links to an IE, involvement in meaningful work. In order to engage in CPD activity, it is likely to only have ‘worth’ to the individual if it is rated in a fair and equitable way and is valid in the sense of having meaning for that individual and their future aspirations.

Resources in terms of time and priorities (CF/CPD) was raised as important for CPD (King, 2004). This links to the JD-R model of resources being the route to engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The individual antecedents of relevance are availability to engage (IE), absorption (IE) linked to a reciprocal relationship and priorities could be connected to the individual decision around work/life balance (IE) and value congruence (IE).

In conclusion, the context of the Government level play a part in the conceptual model in terms of stakeholder interests. The organisational factors seem to be able to be subsumed into organisational antecedents. There is a high degree of connection between antecedents of CPD and engagement, particularly individual and organisational engagement antecedents. Team level antecedents have emerged in the CPD studies and although they are not part of Wollard & Shuck’s, (2011) antecedents, Valentin (2014) has identified the importance of the team in her study with nurses and related jobs. It will be interesting to see if this is a significant finding which can also be applied to academic professionals. At this stage it is not clear how the interplay of individual, team and organisational antecedents come together to result in an engaged or disengaged professional. This will be the focus of later empirical research on professional engagement.

**Bibliography**

References on request

Johnson, (1972, px) informs us that “Professions are occupations with special power and prestige”. They are granted status by the social system in which they perform and they enjoy autonomy due to personal commitment to specific interests although they do have general loyalties. Meerabeau (2006) explains that within the medical profession, Doctors have more power than Nurses in terms of more education (cultural capital); higher pay (economic capital); higher prestige, authority and credibility (social and symbolic capital).

This research is interested in the perceptions by academic staff on the professional recognition process (UKPSF) and the CPD associated with it and its relationship to engagement