



## European Journal of Training and Development

Human resource development in Mauritius: context, challenges and opportunities

Thomas N. Garavan Harris Neeliah Raj Auckloo Raj Ragaven

### Article information:

To cite this document:

Thomas N. Garavan Harris Neeliah Raj Auckloo Raj Ragaven , (2016),"Human resource development in Mauritius: context, challenges and opportunities", European Journal of Training and Development, Vol. 40 Iss 4 pp. 210 - 214

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-04-2016-0018>

Downloaded on: 07 November 2016, At: 02:34 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 13 other documents.

To copy this document: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 428 times since 2016\*

### Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2016),"Is Mauritius ready to become the HRD leader in Africa?: An assessment of strategic human resource development in Mauritius", European Journal of Training and Development, Vol. 40 Iss 4 pp. 215-231 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-11-2015-0088>

(2016),"Barriers to employee training in small and medium sized enterprises: Insights and evidences from Mauritius", European Journal of Training and Development, Vol. 40 Iss 4 pp. 232-247 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-02-2014-0018>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:563821 []

### For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit [www.emeraldinsight.com/authors](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors) for more information.

### About Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

\*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

# Human resource development in Mauritius: context, challenges and opportunities

Thomas N. Garavan

*University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, and*

Harris Neeliah, Raj Auckloo and Raj Ragaven

*Human Resource Development Council, Ebene, Mauritius*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore human resource development (HRD) in Mauritius and the challenges and opportunities faced by organisations in different sectors in adopting HRD practices.

**Findings** – This special issue presents four papers that explore dimensions of HRD in public sector, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and tourism organisations. It also reports on human capital development in the Mauritian economy generally.

**Research limitations/implications** – There is a paucity of knowledge and understanding on HRD in Mauritian organisations. There is significant scope to further explore the effectiveness of national policies and interventions in enhancing HRD and human capital capability.

**Practical implications** – The four papers highlight the important role of organisational champions and of the selection and implantation of HRD practices that are good contextual fit and which can contribute to organisation performance.

**Keywords** SMEs, HRD, Mauritius, Policy and practice, Public sector organisations, Strategic human resource development

**Paper type** Viewpoint

## Introduction

In this special issue, we report on aspects of human resource development (HRD) in Mauritius. Mauritius is an interesting context in which to study HRD practices and structures. It is frequently called an African success story, a country that has placed a strong emphasis on the development of human resources (Croucher and Rizov, 2015, Sandbrook *et al.*, 2007). National government policy places particular emphasis on helping Mauritian companies to develop their human resource capabilities and enhance the capacity of these companies to export (Van Deriorteele and Bird, 2010). The concept of HRD is a relatively modern concept in the context of Mauritius. It is defined in different ways; however, for our purposes, we define it as “the strategic development of human resources to facilitate the achievement of organisational goals in addition to ensuring that employees utilise their skills for organisational performance and competitive advantage” (Garavan, 2014). There is a paucity of knowledge and research about HRD in Mauritius. There is also a lack of research on HRD in developing economies, and we have major gaps in knowledge about HRD practices in sub-Saharan Africa. Preiyag and Hosany (2013) highlight, for example, that HRD in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is not particularly well understood. A variety of factors impede the emergence of strong HRD systems in these states including unfocused government support, a lack of HRD practitioner expertise and an unwillingness by small-



and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest in HRD practices. In addition, there is a lack of understanding of HRD in the Mauritian public sector. The public sector has a major presence in Mauritius. Therefore, the limited research base confines its endeavours to the Anglophone private sector (McCourt and Ramgully-Wong, 2003).

### **Mauritius: Tiger of the Indian Ocean**

Mauritius has been variously described as the “tiger” of the Indian Ocean. It is classified as an upper-middle income economy with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capital of over US\$8,000. It is ranked favourably as a place to do business and its Government has pursued a strong liberal open economic policy with its key planks economic growth, employment and the maintenance of a strong social welfare system (Country Programme Document (Mauritius) United Nations Development Programme (2013-2016)). The Government has placed particular emphasis on attracting both FEI and domestic investment, and as a consequence, there is considerable FDI investment (Croucher and Rizov, 2015). Government policy has focused on the diversification of the economy with priority given to logistics, light manufacturing and tourism and financial services. Recent developments have sought to emphasise that Mauritius is not an island but an “ocean state”. The Island has a strong Human Development Indicator (HDI) score and currently ranks 72 of the 169 countries. In addition, the Mauritian government has had as a core vision the transformation of Mauritius into an intelligent nation through the development of a culture of excellence and achievement and the utilisation of education and training that is inclusive, integrated and holistic in approach to people and country development (Strategic Plan (2008-2020), EHRSP (MOECHR, 2009), Government of Mauritius).

### **The imperatives of human capital development**

The Government of Mauritius gives primacy to the development of human capital. The strategy of the Government, articulated in Vision 2030, is to move Mauritius to a high-income country. This has resulted in the development of a new growth model that places particular emphasis on the development of employability, the development of skills to ensure the effective use of technology, the use of development processes to enhance innovation and SME growth and the promotion of future research and development.

Human capital and skills development is, therefore, a top strategic goal for Mauritius in its drive to achieve a high growth economy. However, in the Mauritian context, it is a complex process and fraught with significant challenges. These challenges include the current dynamics and operation of the labour and job markets. Increasingly, both local and international competition requires that individuals be multi-skilled, resilient, adaptable and possess the competencies to move within and between business sectors and firms. Estimates are that the labour force in Mauritius in 2015 stood at 588,600 with those in employment stood at 542,600, resulting in an unemployment rate of 7.8 per cent (Statistics Mauritius, 2015). In terms of the profile of the unemployed, approximately 43 per cent are under the age of 25 years, 60 per cent are female, a significant proportion has been seeking employment for more than one year and 27 per cent of the unemployed are looking for their first job.

The Mauritius Government and public bodies have taken steps to provide the infrastructure, funding and policy framework within which relevant stakeholders can operate. The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) operates under the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. It is a key

player in the Mauritian skills development ecosystem. It has as its key objectives the following:

- the promotion of human resource development to align with national economic and social objectives;
- the simulation of a culture of development and life-long learning at the individual, organisational and national levels with the aim of enhancing employability and productivity; and
- the provision of systems to develop human capital that will facilitate the successful transformation of Mauritius into a knowledge economy.

The HRDC realises these objectives utilising a variety of mechanisms. These include policy development, focused skills development, projects and targeted financial incentives. The Council adapts a multi-stakeholder approach and works in a multi-institutional way. It has specific responsibility for managing a National Training Fund (NTF), which is operated by a tripartite council. A particular focus of the NT is the promotion of human resource development at enterprise level. These initiatives include helping firms to identify their training needs, the preparation of training plans and interventions designed to upgrade and reskill employees. Through the use of these schemes, the HRDC trains and develops 40,000 to 45,000 employees annually. Important outcome of these schemes include the strengthening of HRD practices in firms, the enhancement of employability through skill upgrading and the promotion of innovation in the use of HRD practices including on the job training, workplace learning and the development of specialised sectoral training interventions.

Government and other stakeholders have identified a number of human capital development challenges that face Mauritius. These include better alignment between human capital development objectives and HRD practices. Greater and more focused investment in technical training by firms, the development of customised technical training interventions, the development of demand-led and more efficient training support schemes and better forecasting of firm skill needs. There is also an acknowledged need to understand the unique constraints faced by SMEs and the development of a training culture in these organisations.

### Summary of the papers

This special issue consists of four empirical papers. In the first paper “Is Mauritius ready to become the HRD Leader in Africa: An Assessment of Strategic Human Resource Development in Mauritius”, [Dusoge and Oogarah \(2016\)](#) explore the extent and application of strategic HRD in Mauritian firms. She found that firms in Mauritius do not develop their human resources in a strategic way. They adopt more tactical approaches. The study found that SHRD is mostly practiced at the level of implementation as a facilitator of the achievement of business strategy. SHRD has little involvement with the formulation of business vision, mission and strategy. She concludes that Mauritian organisations have significant work to do if they are to be leaders in Africa in the adoption of an SHRD approach.

In the second paper “Barriers to Employee Training in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises – Insights & Evidence from Mauritius”, [Padachi and Lukea \(2015\)](#) investigate training and development practices in SMEs in Mauritius. SMEs are a significant component of the Mauritian economy and major contributors to economic growth. These SMEs experience significant barriers to the adoption of training and development including the perceptions of owner-managers financial resource deficiencies and the lack of funding and a variety of external

pressures. They also suffer from a lack of robust training structures and processes. The study found that SME owner managers are aware of the long-term benefits of investment in training and development. They are, however, curtailed by resource deficiencies and consider HRD to be an unaffordable luxury. The authors make a number of recommendations for national policy and support of SMEs. National policy agencies need to exert greater efforts in making owner managers aware of the competitive benefits of training and development and in providing the resource supports to make it happen.

The third paper “Does Human Capital Contribute to Economic Growth in Mauritius?” by [Neeliah and Seetannah \(2016\)](#) investigates whether investment in human capital contributes to economic growth in Mauritius. The paper investigated the relationship between human capital and economic growth using data spanning the period 1970-2011. The study found that investment in human capital has contributed to both short- and long-term growth in Mauritius. The study found a bi-directional relationship between human capital and economic growth. Enhanced human capital formation has a subsequent positive impact on economic growth. The paper highlights policy implications for investment in human capital.

The final paper “The Empowering of Public Sector Officers in the Mauritian Public Sector in the Context of Reforms – How Far has Management Education Helped?” by [Lukea Bhiwajee \(2016\)](#) investigates the role of management education in helping the Mauritian public sector to reform. It specifically investigates how public sector management education programmes helped senior public sector officers to embrace WPM paradigms. The study findings revealed that managers have found it difficult to embrace new public management ideas. They found the HRD interventions to be of value in helping them to perform operational duties. They were, however, of less value in helping to transform the public sector.

## Conclusions

The main objectives of this special issue are to:

- present research on the role and importance of HRD in different sectors and types of firms in Mauritius; and
- identify gaps and constraints to the emergence of SHRD practices and the development of human capital.

The four papers reveal that Mauritian organisations have a significant way to go in terms of utilising training and development to enhance individual, firm and economic growth. Some of the paper findings align with HRD literatures in other types of economies and types of firms. They emphasise that for small Island developing state such as Mauritius to be competitive and to be on par with best international HRD practices, national policy initiatives to focus on strong alignment of incentives and findings policies with gaps in skill supply. In comparison to other countries with a similar HDB, Mauritius has not sufficiently invested in training and development. The papers do, however, reveal that different types of firms and organisations in Mauritius use a variety of training and development practices but not necessarily in a strategic way. The findings of the various studies should be of interest to the Mauritian HRDC. The HRDC should consider how best to enhance the human capital of Mauritius but to do so strategically and select measures that are relevant to the sector. It requires an approach where all stakeholders make concerted efforts to enhance the skills of the economy. The HRDC must work with other actors in the skill ecosystem to ensure the right mix of skills to enhance economic growth.

**References**

- Country Programme Document (Mauritius) United Nations Development Programme (2013-2016).
- Croucher, R. and Rizov, M. (2015), "MNEs and flexible working practices in Mauritius", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 26 No. 21, pp. 2701-2717.
- Dusoge, I. and Oogarah, K. (2016), "Is Mauritius ready to become the HRD leader in Africa? An assessment of strategic human resource development in Mauritius", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 40 No. 4.
- Lukea Bhiwajee, S. (2016), "The empowering of public sector officers in the Mauritian public sector in the context of reforms: how far has management education helped?", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 40 No. 4.
- McCourt, W. and Ramguilly-Wong, A. (2003), "Limits to strategic HRM: the case of the Mauritian civil service", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 600-618.
- Neeliah, H. and Seetanah, B. (2016), "Does human capital contribute to economic growth in Mauritius?", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 40 No. 4.
- Padachi, K. and Lukea, B.S. (2016), "Barriers to employee training in small and medium sized enterprises: insights and evidence from Mauritius", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 40 No. 4.
- Preiyag, C. and Hosany, S. (2013), "Human resource development in the hotel industry in Mauritius: myth or reality", *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 249-266. doi: [10.1080/13683500.2013.787051](https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.787051).
- Sandbrook, R., Edelman, M., Heller, P. and Techman, J. (2007), "Mauritius: evolution of a classic social democracy", in Sandbrook, R., Eldman, M., Heller, P. and Teichman, J. (Eds), *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery: Origins, Challenges and Prospects*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 123-146.
- Statistics Mauritius (2015), "Labour force, employment and unemployment – second quarter 2015", *Economic and Social Indicators*, September 2015, available at: <https://statsmauritius.govmu.org/english/StatsbySubj/Pages/Labour-CMPHS-2nd-Quarter-2015.aspx> (accessed 10 November 2015).
- Strategic Plan (2008-2020), EHRSP (MOECHR, 2009), Government of Mauritius.
- Van Deriorteele, M. and Bird, K. (2010), *Progress in Economic Conditions in Mauritius: Success Against the Odds*, Overseas Development Institute, London.

**Further reading**

- Ramguilly-Wong, A. (2014), "The future of public sector HRM in Mauritius from an accountability perspective", *Open Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 2, pp. 55-63.

**Corresponding author**

Thomas N. Garavan can be contacted at: [thomas.garavan@ul.ie](mailto:thomas.garavan@ul.ie)

---

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)