

## **Organization Development in HRM: a longitudinal study contrasting evolutionary trends between the UK and USA**

Organization Development (OD) roles and skills are in demand in practice, yet they receive scant attention in the academic literature. Using the theoretical lens of population ecology, this study examines the evolution of OD, through a forty-year empirical study. The paper extends current thinking by contrasting the research of academic scholars on the evolution of the HRM profession in the UK and USA. It also presents implications of the data for the future, in practice, and as an academic subject. The methodology applied in this longitudinal study identifies growth and content analysis of job advertisements in the relevant trade press. A key finding of the study is, whilst it has achieved *legitimacy* in UK practice the growth in requirement for OD skills has largely been ignored by scholars. In its current evolutionary phase, the UK form of the profession has been in a stable state, however a small number of HRM scholarly descriptions of 'new HRM' indicate that a further evolution in form has commenced. We argue that the most successful trajectory for evolving professional forms of HRM is through a convergence of HRM, OD and HRD and that UK scholars need to recognise the presence of OD in HRM.

Keywords: OD, HRM, HRD, HR, population ecology

Organization development (OD) is the Cinderella of the Human Resources Management (HRM) subject field. Many scholars writing about HRM and its origins refer to the nature of roles, the perception of its value, the future of the profession and / or the evolutionary changes that have taken place (e.g, Bach, 2005; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Boxall, 1993; Guest, 1987; Hendry & Pettigrew, 1990; Legge, 1978; Legge, 2005; Ruona & Gibson, 2004; Storey, 1992; Strauss, 2001; Tyson & Fell, 1986; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). However, amongst mainstream UK HRM scholars, there is little in the way of acknowledgement of, or explanation for, the apparent underlying growth in the need for OD skills within the HRM profession. Marsh et al. (2009) summarise the criticisms that have been levelled, by academics, at OD, it is: based on unitarist and managerialist perspectives, is an introspective discipline, overly evangelistic, altruistic in nature, not related to the performance of the host organisation, overly process oriented, not sufficiently focused on quantitative outcomes, it is a marginalised function, there is confusion on its values and there is no integration of theories or models.

The contribution of this paper is a framework that explains the development and trajectory of OD within the HRM profession in the UK and compares this with the situation in the USA. The backdrop for the evolution of OD and HRM must be placed within the context of the Anglo-American form of over the past forty years is the inexorable increase in complexity organisations face due to internal and external pressures: global capitalism where unpredictable socio-, political and economic factors events, globalisation, technical technological change, and competition pressures combine to precipitate forces which that compel the drive for rapid and successive changes in organisations (Holbeche, 2012). To understand changes over time, we sought insights are gained from the application of population ecology theory to explain the evolution of OD and to provide an informed prognosis on its future

survival. In UK OD evolution, there have been two different forms of OD. In the 1960s, the behavioural science model akin to the current USA model of the profession was in evidence. The second and current form quickly replaced the earlier version of OD and borrows from strategic HRM rhetoric. As deduced from the content analysis data presented in this paper, we posit that, unlike the situation in the USA, the UK's interpretation of OD has not descended from the OD of the 1960s and 1970s; instead it is much closer to HRM in as much as HRM is strategic, holistic and driven by business imperatives. As such, OD in the UK has had and will continue to have a different evolutionary path from the USA discipline.

An early natural step in scholarly writing is to provide a definition or definitions to provide a clear frame of reference. In the field of OD, the field is fuzzy, there are many definitions of OD and also there are evolutionary changes within these; from USA based academics: Cummings and Worley (2005) cite four definitions, French and Bell (1978) cite nine (four of which they describe as earlier references and five which they describe as more recent). More recent and UK based publications from Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011) provide nine definitions (and then from this provide their own); Francis, Holbeche and Reddington (2012) also provide their own definition; and differentiate between old and new OD. Since the purpose of this paper is to examine the evolution of OD, the authors have consciously chosen not to select a preferred definition. However in the interests of clarity, HRM is used as an overarching term, which includes Human Resources Management (HRM), Organisation Development (OD) and Human Resources Development (HRD) throughout this paper. The definition of HRM can at its simplest be: 'HRM includes anything and everything associated with the management of employment relations in the firm' (Boxall and

Purcell, 2000: 184). The evolution of changes in HRM is documented later in this paper, a contemporary definition of HRM (Bratton and Gold, 2012: 7) emphasis ‘leveraging people’s capabilities and commitment ... through a distinctive set of programmes and practices embedded in an organizational and societal context’. OD does not feature even a mention in the Bratton and Gold (2012) text index; however components of OD territory such as job design, work systems, leading cultural change and strategic leadership and management development are featured.

Driven by the empirical data collected for this study, it was clear that in the main practitioners don’t make a distinction between the two fields of Organisation Development and Organisation Design and for this reason Organisational *Design* is considered integral to OD in this paper, although in the literature they are often considered as separate. ~~Francis et al. (2012) consider that~~ Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011), explain propose the difference between Organisation *Design* and OD in that they. They describe them as being ‘two traditions that are historically distinct but are strongly related’ Judge and Holbeche (2011: 214). Francis et al. (2012) ~~consider that~~ put forward the distinction between Organisation *Design*, as the hard element of change and OD, as the soft element of change, it is not surprising then that practitioners see the two as being part of the same thing – a change process. ~~is not distinct. Driven by the content of job advertisements and the coding of the content, it was clear that in practice, practitioners don’t make a distinction between the two fields and for this reason Organisational *Design* is considered integral to OD in this paper.~~

It would be remiss not to mention the comparative presence and influence of the professional organisations of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) in the UK and SHRM in the USA. In the UK, a professional organisation has now been in place for a century. ~~With its origins~~ date back to 1913, with the founding of in The

Welfare Workers' Association founded in 1913 (CIPDb, n/d). The CIPD's, its power and esteem is exemplified by having been granted *chartered* status, which is a recognition by the Privy Council of its status as being 'reserved for eminent professional bodies' where 'at least 75% of the corporate members should be educated to degree level' (Privy Council Office, n/d: n/p). OD has no separate professional body presence in the UK. OD is an element of the CIPD's professional map; as such it would appear that the CIPD have actively subsumed OD within the HRM profession.

However, the professional body status in the USA for HRM is far less strong.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) was founded in 1948, but remained a volunteer organisation until 1964. The requirement to have a professionally accredited undergraduate or post graduate degree (which the CIPD monopolises in the UK) to fulfil membership criteria is absent. Whilst it would appear that the hallmark of a professional body for HRM in the USA is less strong than in the UK, OD does have a professional presence in the USA with the Organizational Development Network (Organizational Development Network n/d) and its apparently vibrant (conferences, three publications, several university links and post-graduate programmes. This professional body has recently established a European presence through ODN Europe (<http://www.odneurope.org/>)-Organizational Development Network (Organizational Development Network n/d).

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The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: an examination of the evolution of HRM and OD in the UK and USA as described in literature, and within the context of the comparative status of their respective professional body organisations.

This will be followed by a review of population ecology theory. The methodology applied to address the research questions is detailed and an explanation of the content analysis through the application of a coding dictionary is provided. The findings of the developments through the decades are presented. The evolution in the UK is contrasted with the evolution in the USA in the same forty-year period. Finally, there is a discussion of the relevance of the research for the future of HRM.

### **The evolution of HRM and OD in the UK as described by scholars ~~and in its professional body status~~**

Poole (1990: 3) described HRM as involving 'all management decisions that affect the nature of the relationship between the organisation and employees – its human resources'. This description provides a fundamental baseline for the discipline in terms of how it could evolve.

Those who present key themes in the evolution of HRM and its predecessors in the UK include Torrington et al., (2011) who present the development of HRM as chronological eras of normative themes: social justice, humane bureaucracy, negotiated consent, organisation and human resource management. Legge (1978) describes the conformist and deviant innovator roles adopted within Personnel Management. Tyson and Fell (1986) depict three models of personnel management: the clerk of works, the contracts manager and the architect. Later Tyson (2006) describes the evolution to HRM from its most recent predecessor Personnel Management and from the earliest forms through to key phases: welfare, employment management, bureaucratic, industrial relations, professional personnel and currently into HRM. Guest (1987) and Storey (1992) both detail the differences in Personnel Management and HRM and in the late 1990s there is examination of business and strategic partner roles in HRM (Keegan &

Francis, 2010; Pritchard, 2010). Bach (2005) and Storey (2007) describe the development of a new HRM which includes features such as globalisation, permeable organisational boundaries, engagement, branding (Bach, 2007), gives a competitive edge, is strategic in nature, culture is of importance and an integrated approach is key (Storey, 2007).

In terms of the evolution of OD, it is described by Legge (2005) as being in vogue in the 1960s and 70s in the guise of humanistic values, change processes and technology. [The \(incepted in the UK\), socio-technical systems thinking \(Trist, 1981; Trist and Murray, n/d\) is generally not considered to be part of OD. Yet, it has strong parallel themes, was developed in the same timeline as USA OD and clearly there was contact between the key figures since there was a joint UK / USA launch of the Human Relations Journal \(Trist and Murray, n/d\).](#) The underpinning humanistic values approach is also considered to exist in the 1990s (Stewart, 1999). Post 2000, OD is in the ascendance and is posited as merging with HR (Garrow, 2009). Often the content of the OD job roles, include traditional HRD functions, so it would appear from this study that in the UK, OD and HRD are frequently assumed to be *as one*. As outlined above, HRM and its evolution has been an ongoing focus for UK scholars.

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### ***Contrasting with the evolution of the profession in the USA***

~~The professional body status in the USA for HRM is far less strong. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) was founded in 1948, but remained a volunteer organisation until 1964. It has three membership levels, the description of the most senior: a professional member being 'Individuals engaged in human resource management with at least three years of experience at the exempt level; or any individual certified by the Human Resource Certification Institute' (SHRM, 2008, n/p); so a specific programme of certified study is not a requirement. The Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) has been in place since 1976 (HRCI) and there is no clear link to university post graduate programmes to gain certification. Whilst it would appear that the hallmark of a professional body for HRM in the USA is less strong than in the UK, OD does have a professional presence in the USA with its apparently vibrant (conferences, three publications, several university links and post graduate programmes) Organizational Development Network (Organizational Development Network n/d).~~

In the USA the professions of HRM, OD and HRD have retained a more segmented specialist model, which from the population ecology theory stance in the evolutionary process carries more risk for survival. Strauss (2001) explains that whilst amongst UK scholars the label of HRM has been commonly acknowledged as originating in the USA, this had in turn led to assumptions about the practice of the discipline. He clarifies that, despite the label, the practice in the USA was still much closer to the UK model of traditional Personnel Management.

Ruona & Gibson (2004) describe OD, HRD and HRM in the US as having come not only from distinctly separate professional roots, but to also have evolved in different timeframes. They describe HRM as beginning in the mid 1980s, HRD as having begun in the late 1970s and with OD being considered as the oldest of the disciplines from its inception in the mid to late 1970s. Ruona & Gibson (2004; 51) consider that OD has not been subsumed within HRM, at least 'not yet'. Strauss (2001) also describes the development of HRM from three related, but distinctly discrete, fields in his writing: 'personnel, human relations and organizational behaviour (OB)' (Strauss, 2001, p. 876).

In population ecology theory, the narrow niche specialist (as is the current USA form of OD) takes the risk that if the environment changes it will find it difficult to survive. This is borne out by Greiner & Cummings' (2004) warning that the US OD population is at risk of extinction. Ruona & Gibson (2004: 60) also argue for a converged model of the HRM, HRD and OD disciplines and state 'it is simply no longer viable to insist that these three fields are as distinct as they once were.'

Ulrich (1997) describes a broader approach: HRM as evolving through emerging community, rather than individual forms of contributor, such as those who identify themselves as core HRM professionals. He advises that essential to securing the necessary competences, is gaining exposure to corporate and site roles, business and outside HRM experience and time spent in specialist and generalist roles (Ulrich, 1997). Along with Brockbank (2005), he outlines the key roles of HRM as being – employee champion, administrative expert, change agent, and strategic partner. Becker & Huselid (2006) emphasise that HRM should embrace value creation for the organisation, not just operational excellence.

Ulrich's (1997) view that a more broad experience base should come from time spent in business roles, complements Ruona & Gibson's (2004) viewpoint that

organisations require integrated solutions which can be best delivered by and with combined and joined up contributions from HRM, HRD and OD perspectives. In practice though, the USA forms of HRM, HRD and OD populations have been slow to become broad niche and may struggle to retain their legitimate place unless they embrace an evolution similar to the way in which the UK profession has done. In terms of the future for HRM careers, the evidence is no matter what the label, the trend for organisations to require more integrated solutions will continue and Poole's (1990) broad, holistic description where a broader niche form will survive, holds as strongly now as it did in 1990.

### **The application of population ecology theory in the development of OD and HRM**

We argue that despite having the same name, the current evolution of OD in the UK is not a descendent of the original behavioural science, humanistic values USA model of OD, but is instead likely to be more a generalist descendant of HRM.

Population ecology draws upon Darwin's theory which purports that there is a cyclical model of variation, selection, retention, and modification of individual characteristics, and the stronger and fitter varieties are more likely to survive (Morgan, 1986). Population ecologists (such as Aldrich, 1979; Hannan and Freeman, 1977) have focused on understanding how different organisations and other species rise and fall in importance, and what influences this success or failure. As changes in the environment occur, new populations emerge to take advantage of these opportunities, and other populations decline and disappear. In order for existing populations to survive changes need to be made in the hope they will evolve and survive. Failure to do so can bring

about their decline and extinction with only the more adaptable species surviving. New populations can emerge through the dissemination of innovation and/ or adoption of new practices (Morgan, 1986).

Population ecology has attracted much consensus in terms of its theory and methodology approach (Pfeffer, 1993). However, there are still several research themes which have emerged and these can be categorised as: 1) organisational founding; 2) niche-width and resource partitioning; 3) density and age dependence; and 4) organisational change and inertia (Salimath and Jones III; 2011; Carroll and Hannan, 2000). Each of these is reviewed in relation to OD and HRM.

### ***1. Organisational founding, forms and boundaries***

Organisational founding is a key element of ecology as it helps to identify new organisational forms and populations. Carroll & Hannan (2000, p.68) discriminate between forms and populations; they describe forms as ‘a kind of externally-enforced identity’ (Carroll & Hannan, 2000, p. 68). Populations are delimited by ‘social-system boundaries’ (chosen to reflect the barriers to the operations of relevant social processes such as the flow of information, competition, and regulation) (Carroll & Hannan, 2000, p. 74). In HRM and OD, the boundaries are formed by functional and professional structures and identities.

However, delineation is not quite so simple; there are fuzzy boundaries in terms of the breadth and depth of entity of the organism under study, any part of a population can have more than one identity and these are often nested. Whether OD is a nested subset of HRM or not, will depend upon how those involved in OD self identify, since nesting arrangements are not always clear or straightforward (Carroll & Hannan, 2000).

In the USA, unlike the situation in the UK, HRM and OD have a long tradition of being and continue to be different professional groupings (Ruona & Gibson, 2004).

## ***2. Niche-width and resource partitioning***

From its assumed roots, OD might be presumed to be a more specialised niche discipline than is the generalist HRM, but in its current evolution in the UK, it is broader than the earlier UK and USA versions of OD. Niche theory explains that specialized (narrow niche) organisations are designed for a particular environment and in that context they will always out-perform the generalist (broad niche, in this case HRM). In a generalist role, the practitioners have to carry extra capacity (practicing across a wider skill set), which allow them to perform in other environments. The specialist maximises the advantages of a specific environment, but is at risk if the situation changes, as it did for the 1960s and 70s form of OD (Legge, 2005). Adaption / survival will be more difficult for narrow niche specialists, whilst for broader niche UK OD and HRM, in their *jack of all trades* form, there is potentially less to gain, but also less risk to their ongoing survival.

Resource partitioning is a key theme of population ecology and is based on the hypothesis by increasing market concentrations for generalists creates opportunities for specialist in peripheral markets (Carroll et al., 2002). In describing resource partitioning, Hannan, et al. (2007) explain the endogenous partitioning of markets (environments) as an outcome of competition between populations of generalists and specialists. The provision of HRM services do not always come from within the organisation and in the competitive market may be provided from an outsourced organisation. Resource partitioning would suggest that the competitive generalist service provided by outsourced organisations concentrate on the centre of the market

where there are greater economies of scale. This leaves a more abundant and still sizeable periphery market where more skilled OD and HRM (e.g. Business Partners) can thrive.

### ***3. Density and age dependence***

Population ecology theory posits relationships between the densities of organisations in a population with the legitimisation of that organisation (Hannan et al., 2007). Although it was a function dismissed by Legge, (2005) as a *has been*, with the rapid growth in the number of OD roles identified in this study, by increasing its density, OD, has now achieved legitimisation. An aspect of the density dependence theory is that legitimisation is 'sticky' (Hannan et al. 2007). That is, once a professional grouping such as OD has sufficient density in the population, it has earned a reputation as a legitimate contributor. Once in place, this legitimacy is not easily reversible. With its on-going growth in numbers and professional status in the CIPD (CIPDa, n/d) in the UK, OD appears to have established a legitimate form.

There are threats at each stage of evolution. New organisations have the propensity of higher failure levels (Stinchcombe, 1965; Carroll, 1985) and there is a risk again as it ages, when the possibility of obsolescence is a threat to its mortality (Hannan et al. 2007). The previous incarnation of OD in the UK did not survive the inception stage; whereas the density of roles in its current evolution demonstrates that it has survived this phase.

### ***4. Change, Inertia, and stabilisation in the population***

Population ecology challenges the view that organisations can effectively change in response to changes in the environment (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Change is thought to be at a population level and is a result of organisational selection and replacement (Carroll, 1988). This does not suggest that individual organisations cannot change but often changes can be to the detriment of the long term survival of the organisation (Barnett and Carroll, 1995).

Inertia is presented as an important feature of population ecology with scholars reporting that environmental selection favours organisations with high levels of inertia (Hannan and Freeman, 1984). Hannan, et al. (2007) argue that reliability and accountability are features that enhance the survival prospects of a population, although, these useful characteristics can also lead to inertia. The decades that it takes for each evolution in form in the HRM profession can be explained by Harding's view of the 'principle of stabilization' that a culture at rest tends to remain at rest' (in Sahlins & Service, 1960: 54). A long term and stable presence provides competitive advantage in terms of cultural dominance, nonetheless without ongoing evolution in keeping with the environment, the population risks its mortality (Singh & Lumsden, 1990).

Inertia is prevalent in the OD community in the USA, where many are fiercely defending their humanistic values roots and professional turf (Ruona & Gibson, 2004). Greiner & Cummings (2004) caution on the possibility of the terminal decline of OD and Ruona & Gibson (2004) warn of the potential for a split in the OD profession. This resonates with Service's (in Sahlins & Service, 1960) position, that in an evolution, the more adapted and specialised forms are less likely to progress into the next evolution.

Population ecology theory provides a conceptual framework with which to study the chronological stages of adaption and stability (Sahlins & Service, 1960). The

proposition that evolution is a chronological process holds true for the development of OD and HRM. Following on from previous HRM evolutions, traditional Personnel Management lasted for two to three decades (1960 – 1980), there was a development into HRM and that has been in a stable phase for the last two to three decades (1980 – present). Ruona & Gibson (2004) predict that in the USA the last period of stability is coming to an end and the nature of a ‘new HRM’ is being described by UK scholars Bach (2005) and Storey (2007).

A summary of the dimensions of population ecology is encapsulated within Table 1.

**Insert Table 1.**

### **Research aims and objectives**

The aim of this paper is to examine from an ecological perspective the development and trajectory of OD within the HRM profession in the UK and compare that with scholars’ views of the development of the profession in the USA. In applying key themes of population ecology theory an objective was to evaluate the founding of the OD population and the forms which have been selected and survived in the Evolution of OD job roles within UK HRM. A further objective was to review the density and age dependency of the UK OD population to establish whether it has achieved legitimacy and is therefore likely to survive. Furthermore, the authors wanted to examine the resource partitioning theory of the OD population to establish whether it has evolved in a *broad niche* generalist / holistic form that is integrated with HRM. Finally, the ecology of the OD population is assessed to see how it has responded to changes in the environment.

## Methodology

This paper examines the on-going development of OD/HRM as an ecological process over a forty-year time period in the UK. Longitudinal methodology is appropriate to organizational population ecology study and has been applied in other research studies such as Salimath and Jones III (2011), Hjalager (2000) and Gifford and Mulner (1988). Content analysis is suitable as a transparent research method for longitudinal research and for application to mass media material (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It has been used to understand the developments and evolution in professional job roles in cited published research (Todd, McKeen, & Gallupe, 1995). Care has been taken to select appropriate media, samples and to minimise rater bias through the development and application of a coding dictionary (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

With a current membership of 135,000 members (CIPDa, n/d) and membership publication which contained job advertisements since 1967, the CIPD trade press publication *People Management* (and its predecessors) was selected as the most suitable source for this study. It is of note, that job advertisements can be considered as a genre of organisational communication (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), not simply as factual and objective narrative, therefore samples of the narratives are provided in the findings. Through this longitudinal study trends in the rise of OD jobs could be tracked. The count of job advertisements over the decades provided information to make an informed decision on the sampling mechanism for the content analysis.

The search terms for the job roles which would be included in the study were defined: all job advertisements which had '*OD*', '*Organisation Development*' or '*Organisational Development*' were to be counted. The count was logged for each

month of publication and for the source of the issue used (i.e. which library). ~~{Cheung Judge and Holbeche (2011), explain the difference between Organisation Design and OD. They describe them as being ‘two traditions that are historically distinct but are strongly related’ Judge and Holbeche (2011: 214), Francis et al. (2012) consider that the distinction between Organisation Design, as the hard element of change and OD, as the soft element of change is not distinct. Driven by the content of job advertisements and the coding of the content, it was clear that in practice, practitioners don’t make a distinction between the two fields and for this reason Organisational Design is considered integral to OD in this paper.~~

With 19 roles in all the advertisements up to 1985, all of these adverts were subjected to content analysis. The count of job roles was carried out for the forty-year period. Providing 220 advertisements, each fifth year since 1990 was selected as the sample to be subjected to analysis. In the future, subject to funding and additional resource, an opportunity exists to conduct further analysis of all job roles across the decades.

### ***The Content Analysis***

To ensure coding reliability, exact words / phrases were recorded in a coding dictionary (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The context of phrases affected how they might be coded, so, for example, the coding ‘Change Management’ was applied where the words: *Change, Change Management, Strategic Change, Vision, Change Programme, New Direction, Future, Transform/ational* appeared in an advertisement.

Advertisements varied significantly in length; therefore, where there was a recurrence of words aligned to one theme it was considered each theme should only be coded once. The coding dictionary developed and applied to the advertisements

included the following categories: 'Change Management', 'Consultancy Orientation', 'Cultural Issues', 'HR', 'HRD', 'OD', 'Effectiveness', 'Organisational Learning Orientation', 'Partnership Issues', 'Strategic Approach', 'Leadership', 'Organisation Wide Perspective' and 'Interpersonal Skills'. A sample of the coding used for 'Change Management' can be found in Table 2 below.

**Insert Table 2**

### **Findings: The growth and evolution of OD roles**

A primary objective of this research was to study the evolution of OD roles in HRM in the UK. The numbers of roles with a form of OD in the job title in forty-year period is detailed in Graph 1 below.

**Insert Graph 1**

There is growth in the OD roles in the UK, combined with a change in the nature of the content over the decades. In addition to the job roles specifically *badged* OD, there will be other jobs which are primarily OD in nature, so if anything, the measure of growth found in this study is likely to be conservative. This method was chosen, since using only roles with a form of OD in the title provides more consistency than could be achieved by selecting job roles from reviewing the full content of the job advertisements.

The authors sought to develop a broad measure of the proportionate use of this hard copy media over the period of the study, against which to be able to understand the relative growth of OD roles, i.e. was this just part of an overall increase in HR job roles. A page count was carried out on a sample of issues of the publication; all March and September issues in five year slices; see Graph 2. In the evolutionary growth trend, in *real* terms (i.e. when compared against the total number of HR job roles advertised), if

the 2010 OD advertisement numbers were weighted to reflect the overall level of hard copy advertisements, it may be a further increase by a multiple of four or five.

Insert Graph 2

### *Evolution in the content of roles and changes in the rhetoric over the decades*

The data from the content analysis has been expressed as a percentage of job roles for the period reported, with raw numbers detailed below. This is to enable comparison over the decades. The results for the OD job roles are in Table 3.

Insert Table 3

#### *The 1970s*

The first job role advertised (Shell Chemical UK Limited, 1972, p. 78) is for a person to manage a change consultancy programme; with specific reference to ‘the optimisation of the socio-technical system’. Although it can be argued that socio-technical systems thinking is not part of ongoing mainstream OD it is based on the work of founders of the UK Tavistock Institute (Trist, 1981; Trist and Murray, n/d). The connection with key USA OD figures at that time include that in its second year together with the Research Center for Group Dynamics, headed by a key figure in USA OD, Lewin, they jointly launched the Human Relations Journal (Trist and Murray, n/d). Other job advertisements in the 1970s (Rank Xerox UK Limited, 1973; Central Electricity Generating Board, 1974) referred to behavioural science, but seemed to mix this requirement with more traditional personnel management roles.

The narrative of two of the job roles clearly places them as traditional training and management development roles (Sainsbury's, 1973; Dudley Metropolitan Borough, 1979). With the exception of the Shell job advertisement and one other (MSL, 1977), the other advertisements appear to be based on a fuzzy understanding of OD, or at best a lack of common agreement as to what exactly OD is comprised of.

### ***The 1980s***

There continues to be job advertisements which, although labelled as OD, when much of the content appears to be that of traditional Personnel Management (Metro, 1980) and (Qatar General Petroleum Corporation, 1989).

Job advertisements which seem to principally be HRD roles continue, (British Aerospace Commercial Aircraft, 1989; Saccone & Speed, 1982), some appear to be a hybrid of HRD and OD (Exxon Chemicals, 1987).

More traditional OD jobs are still in evidence, with narratives such as 'improved organisational effectiveness, managing the process of change which will result in facilitating the resolution of personal, group and inter-group issues' (Doctus Management Consultancy, 1986, p. 111). However a new breed of OD advertisements appears to start in the 1980s, particularly from the middle to the end of the decade, with an increase in overall Director / Head of the HR function roles (such as in Riverside Health Authority, 1985).

### ***The 1990s***

In reviewing the 5 year samples used from 1990 onwards, in 1990, it was particularly apparent that there was a preponderance of HRD roles, with 8 out of 12 roles having 'Management Development' in the role title. Director / Head of, traditional OD roles are

all still evident. Change, a strategic approach, culture, and organisational effectiveness / performance are now becoming much stronger features of the narratives.

### *Since 2000*

The 54 job advertisements in the year 2000 show a diverse mix. In terms of the additional content in the job title (in 24 of the advertisements), there are 6 with HR / Personnel, 14 have some form of HRD and 2 mention 'Change' in the title. The biggest single content in these job roles, is 'Change Management' (see Table 4). This emphasis continues to be the case in 2005 and 2010. Whilst 'culture' is sometimes used, there is a dearth of *behavioural sciences* terminology in later advertisement. There is growth in the use of 'Strategic', 'Performance' and terms which suggest there should no longer be a funnelled functional role, but practitioners should be concerned with matters outside of HR (see Table 4). The rhetoric of 'shaping and implementing an OD strategy which has direct impact on overall business performance' (Post Office, 2005, p. 75) is common, as is 'creating a high performance culture' (Decisions for Growth, 2005, p. 66) and 'you will have the ... strategic mind-set to understand the bigger picture and to make a key contribution across the organisation' (EEDA, 2010, p. 68).

Lastly, an advert that contains much of the spirit of the contemporary roles with OD in the title is:

'... to continue to build a resilient and agile organisation that is capable of adapting to the needs of the organisational environment as it changes ... You will ... provide strategic leadership to ensure that the organisation has the necessary capacity, capability, systems and process in place to deliver our ambitious plans' ... you will have ... the ability to work effectively across organisational boundaries.' (NHS Barking and Dagenham, 2010).

Having examined the academic scholars description of developments and the evidence from this study, a summary of the primary chronological development is presented in Table 4. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all relevant scholarly writing, rather it is a representation of key trends in the evolution.

**Insert Table 4**

## **Discussion**

A table of the findings related to the research objectives and interfaced with population ecology theory can be found in Table 5.

**Insert Table 5**

In summary, the main finding from this empirical study is the founding of the OD population in HR in the UK since the early 1970s. The evolution (Sahlins and Service, 1960; Boyd and Richardson, 1985) of OD has seen a steady growth in roles which commenced in the mid 1980s, and from the turn of the millennium the growth of jobs advertised has been exponential. This answers our first research objective which was to enquire whether there is a growing presence of OD job roles within HRM in the UK. From an ecological perspective organisational or population founding is useful to identify which new forms, or in this case new roles, are being selected (Hannan and Freeman, 1989). The liability of newness clearly was not an issue for OD (Stinchcombe, 1965; Carroll, 1985) and the density of the population suggests it has achieved a legitimate place (Hannan et al. 2007) in UK HRM and that there is an affirmative on the second research enquiry.

Turning to the final research objective, as well as the growth in the population, from the content analysis of the job advertisements we can see that the nature of the form of OD has changed over time (Hannan and Freeman, 1984). The language used in

earlier advertisements being akin to the niche (Hannan and Freeman, 1977) USA model of the profession of OD with an emphasis on the application of the behavioural sciences, but with the rhetoric in the recent OD adverts being more generalist closer to the rhetoric of Strategic HRM and therefore more likely to survive changes in evolutionary form (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Throughout the last thirty year period, there are roles which use the label of OD, but which have a training / management development / learning and development orientation and the primary orientation of these (as HRD roles) has remained unchanged (Sahlins and Service, 1960; Hannan et al. 2007). The nature of contemporary UK OD is primarily holistic, integrated with strategic HRM, generalist rather than narrow niche specialist and, in response to research question three, is in a broad niche form (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). As such, along with its density and legitimisation, short / medium term survival prospects appear to be very strong (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Hannan et al. 2007).

Implications of these findings for the HRM profession's trajectory are that the underlying skill set within OD is becoming increasingly important within the HRM profession. Ulrich, (1997) outlines four domains in which the HR profession can add value: management of strategic human resources, firm infrastructure, employee contribution and transformation and change, all of which can be delivered from the UK approach to OD. An evolution in the nature of the role is clearly demonstrable. With the growing emphasis on the importance of HRM having influence at a strategic level, elements of the domain of broad niche OD (change management, organizational culture, effectiveness and performance) appear to be considered as elements of HRM in becoming a more strategic contributor. The strategic and effectiveness (business / personal) performance focus so present in roles in this study, echoes descriptions of the profession by scholars such as Becker & Huselid (2006).

- In terms of the contrast between the UK and the USA, the evidence provided in this paper demonstrates that UK HRM practitioners have already evolved into the converged model proposed by Ruona & Gibson, (2004). The comparative monopoly and regulation in the UK by the CIPD acts as an additional influence in the survival of the established professional grouping (Bergström, Engwall and Wallerstedt; 1994). If USA practitioners can overcome their historical factions, work towards a more powerful and integrated professional body regulating entry and continuance in the profession and learn from the evolved converged model of HRM in the UK, then the potential for extinction of OD (Greiner & Cummings, 2004) may be prevented and the provision of integrated solutions needed by organisations (Ruona & Gibson, 2004) could provide a successful trajectory for the HRM profession.

An implication for practice in the UK is to ensure that the training and career paths are available to ensure future generations of HRM, OD and HRD practitioners continue to acquire broad niche skills (Hannan and Freeman, 1997). In the USA the data collected in this study demonstrates how the UK form of OD has been successful in, not only surviving evolutionary changes, but thriving in its broad niche form to achieve density and legitimisation (Hannan et al., 2007). The implications in this paper are primarily for UK academic scholars; as HRM academics, we need to be faster to understand the reality of the evolution of practice. With the increasing focus and pressure to deliver on *impact* (Starkey & Madan, 2001), for us to achieve evolutionary survival, we must be able to provide timely and relevant research advice for the profession.

All research studies have their limitations and this study is no exception. Whilst there were good methodological reasons for collecting the data from one source of media, the results are not as comprehensive as they could have been by using other forms of media.

A ~~key~~ limitation of this study is that the methodology has concentrated on the evidence from within the UK ~~and from within the~~ HRM populations. ~~With~~ ~~†~~ The size and significant distribution of the USA professional group and the lack of consistency that is provided by ~~in a leading professional body, it was not possible to apply the content analysis method to the USA~~ led to US context being outside the scope of this study. ~~Moreover, With changes in recruitment methods and with the move away from hard copy advertisement (as demonstrated displayed in Graph 2), as to online attraction methods gathered pace towards around 2010, it would not be possible to~~ weakens the use of content analysis, as used in this study, ~~extend this method beyond 2010.~~ ~~In~~ ~~An area for future further research work therefore is to~~ it would be our intention to not only look at other methods for collecting data ~~and, but to~~ widen the study to include information from other stakeholders in the UK such as academics and business leaders and from OD practitioners in the USA, ~~such as gathering qualitative data from practitioners, academics and from business leaders, to develop a more rounded explanation of the phenomena.~~

The constructive comments from the anonymous reviewers were extremely helpful in shaping this paper and are gratefully acknowledged.

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**Table 1. Dimensions of Population Ecology Theory**

<b>Dimension of Population Ecology Theory (PET)</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Explanation of each dimension within PET</b>	<b>Application to OD / HRM</b>
Evolution	Sahlins and Service (1960); Boyd and Richardson (1985)	Evolution is a descent with modification, succession of cultural stages, and a transmission from one generation to the next.	In the UK, HRM descended from Traditional Personnel Management. Unlike the situation in the USA, the evolution of current OD in the UK is a descent from within the field of HRM.
Population, forms and fuzzy boundaries	Carroll and Hannan (2000); Hannan et al. (2007)	Populations are social systems bounded by common processes, flows of information, competition and regulation. Forms arise from externally enforced identity. Boundaries in populations are often fuzzy.	OD/HRM populations are bounded by professional identities, regulations, the CIPD and competition. Forms arise through businesses having HRM functions. Amongst the fuzzy boundaries, is that between HRM, OD and HRD?
Inertia and change; adaption and stability	Hannan et al. (2007) Sahlins and Service (1960) Salimath and Jones III (2011) Carroll and Hannan, (2000)	Reliability and accountability are features which favour survival potential; however these characteristic can lead to inertia. A culture at rest tends to remain at rest. Change can be so disruptive that there is increased potential for mortality.	The HRM profession (and its precedents) has a long history in the UK, with a professional organisation presence since 1913. Whilst the profession has adapted, the rate of change has been slow and therefore each evolution survives the mortality of the previous form in the HRM population.

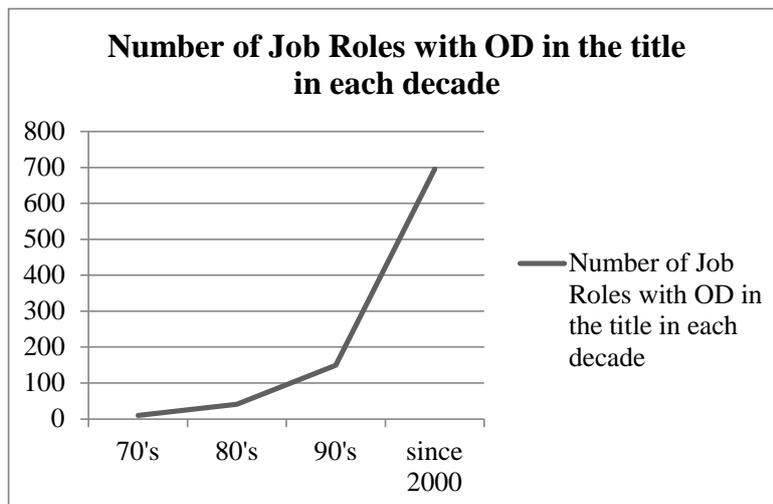
<b>Dimension of Population Ecology Theory (PET)</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Explanation of each dimension within PET</b>	<b>Application to OD / HRM</b>
Niche width	Hannan & Freeman (1977) Salimath and Jones III (2011) Carroll and Hannan, (2000)	Generalist organisations succeed in unstable / uncertain environments, but with less risk there is less reward. Specialised organisations risk their survival in anything other than stable / certain environments, but their reward is higher	As a generalist function, HRM survives in the long term through stable and unstable environments. As the environment became less certain, the early and much specialised old OD of the 1960s and 1970s did not survive. However in its current incarnation in the UK OD is more generalist in nature, integrated with HRM, therefore more likely to survive. However, in the USA, the highly specialised OD risks extinction.
Resource partitioning	Carroll, (1985); Hannan et al. (2007) Salimath and Jones III (2011) Carroll and Hannan, (2000)	Prediction of founding and mortality of specialist and generalist organisations as a function of market concentration. If the generalists concentrate on the centre of the market, there is more scope for the specialists to exploit the periphery market.	As competitive generalist HRM providers (such as outsourcing services) concentrate on the centre of the market for HRM services (where there are greater economies of scale), this leaves a more abundant periphery market where more skilled practitioners such as OD or HRM Business Partners can thrive.
Density dependence	Hannan & Freeman, (1977) Hannan et al. (2007) Salimath and Jones III (2011) Carroll and Hannan, (2000)	With increasing presence comes legitimation and legitimation is sticky.	As there is an increasing presence of a generalist form of OD in HRM in the UK, then its survival becomes more certain. Although not generally acknowledged by academics, OD has become more recognised as a legitimate function amongst practitioners.

<b>Dimension of Population Ecology Theory (PET)</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Explanation of each dimension within PET</b>	<b>Application to OD / HRM</b>
Age dependence	Hannan & Freeman, (1977) Hannan et al. (2007) Salimath and Jones III (2011) Carroll and Hannan, (2000)	There are threats at each different stages of evolution; there is a risk phase in the founding of a population and again as it ages, when the possibility of obsolescence is a threat to its mortality.	The current evolution of OD (in the UK) has survived its founding phase and has not yet aged. HRM, in its current evolution must change sufficiently, to meet environmental needs in order not to risk obsolescence.

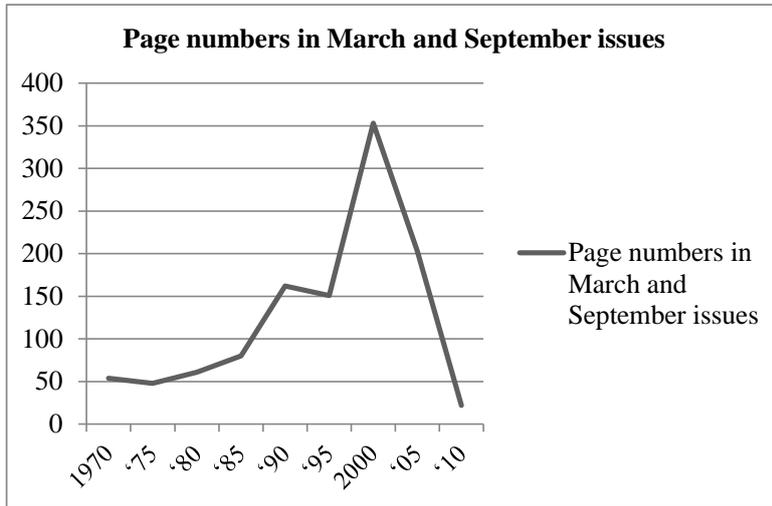
**Table 2. A sample from the coding dictionary, the terms coded as ‘Change Management’**

Terms Coded	Code
Change/ing, Change Management, Strategic Change, Vision, Change Programme, New Direction, Future, Transform/ational/ing, Expansion, Adapts, Growth, Growing, Develop/ments (in relation to the service / business), New Organisational Arrangements, Inception, Regeneration, Merge/r, Innovative plans, Innovation, Modernising	Change Management

**Graph 1. The number of occurrences of OD Job advertisements in each decade in the 40 years from 1970**



**Graph 2. Trends in the number of pages of adverts – March and September issues in each 5 year period since 1970**





**Table 3. The evolution of content in the OD job roles**

	Change	Consultancy	Culture (inc Behavioural)	HR	HRD	OD	Effectiveness	Learning Organisation	Partnership	Strategic	Leader	Org Wide	Advert numbers
<b>Expressed as a % of total for the cohort</b>													
1970s	54.55	54.55	90.91	36.36	36.36	81.82	36.36	0.00	0.00	9.09	9.09	9.09	
1980s	77.78	55.56	33.33	100.00	55.56	88.89	33.33	0.00	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	
1990	100.00	63.64	27.27	18.18	81.82	18.18	36.36	0.00	0.00	54.55	18.18	54.55	
1995	75.00	58.33	33.33	66.67	100.00	91.67	58.33	0.00	8.33	75.00	33.33	25.00	
2000	80.70	54.39	29.82	42.11	66.67	68.42	50.88	19.30	17.54	45.61	29.82	50.88	
2005	75.64	51.28	30.77	50.00	70.51	62.82	60.26	12.82	46.15	62.82	56.41	47.44	
2010	83.33	44.44	47.22	66.67	44.44	58.33	66.67	11.11	47.22	69.44	61.11	55.56	
<b>Decades</b>													
70s	54.55	54.55	90.91	36.36	36.36	81.82	36.36	0.00	0.00	9.09	9.09	9.09	
80s	77.78	55.56	33.33	100.00	55.56	88.89	33.33	0.00	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	
90s	87.50	60.98	30.30	42.42	90.91	54.92	47.35	0.00	4.17	64.77	25.76	39.77	
Since 2000	79.89	50.04	35.94	52.92	60.54	63.19	59.27	14.41	36.97	59.29	49.12	51.29	
<b>Raw number count</b>													
1970s	6	6	10	4	4	9	4	0	0	1	1	1	11
1980s	7	5	3	9	5	8	3	0	0	3	0	0	9
1990	11	7	3	2	9	2	4	0	0	6	2	6	11
1995	9	7	4	8	12	11	7	0	1	9	4	3	12
2000	46	31	17	24	38	39	29	11	10	26	17	29	57
2005	59	40	24	39	55	49	47	10	36	49	44	37	78
2010	30	16	17	24	16	21	24	4	17	25	22	20	36

**Table 4. Samples of the chronological development of HRM (HR/M, OD & HRD)**

<b>Evolution of the profession in the UK</b>				
<b>Pre 1970s</b>	<b>1970s</b>	<b>1980s</b>	<b>1990s</b>	<b>Since 2000 and the forward trajectory</b>
Welfare, industrial relations, manpower control and professional role traditions (Tyson & Fell, 1986)	Traditional Personnel Management (TPM) (Guest, 1987)  Personnel Management – conformist and deviant innovators (Legge, 1978)  OD – considered to be in vogue, three elements – humanistic values, change processes and technology (1960s and 70s) (Legge, 2005)	HRM – arrived (mid 1980s) (Hendry & Pettigrew, 1990)  HRM – differentiation between Personnel management and Human resource management (Guest, 1987)  Personnel Management – ‘clerk of works’, ‘contracts manager’, ‘architect’ roles (Tyson & Fell, 1986)	HRM – 25 item comparison checklist provided on the difference between Personnel & IR and HRM (beginning of the decade) (Storey, 1992)  HRM - Business Partner model of HRM developed from Ulrich model (late 1990’s to current) (Keegan & Francis, 2010)  HRD – <i>Employee Development</i> terminology in use (Stewart, 1999)  HRD – lack of integration of training in HRM (Rainbird, 1994)  HRD - <i>training and development</i> if often bound in the national context and educational infrastructure (sample Ashton & Felstead, 1995)  OD – underpinning humanistic values continues to be assumed (Stewart, 1999)	HRM – HR Strategic Partner Identity (Pritchard, 2101)  HRM – ‘new’ HR – including globalisation, permeable organisational boundaries, engagement, branding (Bach, 2005)  HRM – ‘new’ HR gives a competitive edge, is strategic, managers role is critical, culture is more important than systems and integrated action is required. (Storey, 2007)  OD – Organisation Development as Management Development (Guest & King, 2005)  OD – In the ascendance in the UK (Garrow, 2009)  OD & HRM - OD & HR – merging (Garrow, 2009)  HRD – The debate as to whether HRD is part of HRM or are separate but occupy complimentary spaces (Watson, 2010)  HRD – Strategically aligned to business goals, internal change consultants (Swart, Mann, Brown, & Price, 2005)

## Evolution of the profession in USA

Pre 1970s	1970s	1980s	1990s	Since 2000 and the forward trajectory
<p>HRM - Name (but not necessarily practice) change from Personnel Management to HRM (from the late 1960s) (Strauss, 2001)</p> <p>OD - The early founders of OD, using approaches such as T-Groups, Theory X &amp; Y, Participative Management. (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p>	<p>HRD - Coining of the term HRD (in 1970) &amp; the origins of HRD (through to late 1970s) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p> <p>OD - the origins of the profession of OD (mid to late in the decade) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p>	<p>HRM –Harvard School framework for HRM (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills, &amp; Walton, 1984)</p> <p>OD – new OD: post modern philosophy, drawing on new sciences, multiple social realities, and emphasis on changing mindsets. Published in a British journal, by USA and Australia based authors (Marshak &amp; Grant, 2008)</p> <p>HRD &amp; OD - The convergence of Training and OD AND splintering between more traditional forms of training and HRD (since the end of the last decade until the late 1980s) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p> <p>OD –strategic change focus (mid 1980s to current) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p>	<p>HRM – strategic partner model (Ulrich,1997)</p> <p>HRM – HRM may be used in rhetoric, but it remains weak in terms of influence (Kochan &amp; Dyer, 1995)</p> <p>HRM - Shift from administrative personnel department to practices more akin to HRM (the beginning of the decade) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p> <p>HRM – Creating future strategic alternatives (late 1990s to current) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p> <p>HRD – Ensuring competence, agility and reflectivity in a knowledgeable workforce (mid 1990s to current) (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p>	<p>HRM – Employee champion, administrative expert, change agent, strategic partner (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005)</p> <p>HRM – Focus on value creation rather than organisational operational excellence (Becker &amp; Huselid, 2006)</p> <p>HRM, OD, HRD opportunity for convergence (Ruona &amp; Gibson, 2004)</p> <p>OD – serious concern for future viability unless it becomes more strategic in nature (Greiner &amp; Cummings, 2004)</p>

	<b>Pre 70s</b>	<b>1970s</b>	<b>1980s</b>	<b>1990s</b>	<b>Since 2000 and the forward trajectory</b>
Total number of UK OD job advertisements in the decade	0	10	41	149	696
5 most prominent features: from the Content Analysis of the job advertisements in the sample	N/A	Behavioural / Culture OD Change & Consultancy HR, HRD & Effectiveness	HR OD Change Consultancy & HRD	HRD Change Strategic Consultancy OD	Change OD HRD Strategic & Effectiveness
What does the content analysis evolution in the job advertisements tell us?		The more traditional USA model of OD was in prominence at this point, hence the focus on behavioural / cultural issues, change & consultancy.	OD takes on mainstream HRM characteristics, Change continues to be prominent. HRD in OD is as much to the fore as an orientation to consultancy roles.	HRD roles are now often using the label OD; whether these are primarily HRD roles (where OD labelling has become fashionable) or is a change in OD is debateable. Change continues to be an important feature, but a strategic orientation has now become much more significant. The idealistic, values based approach to OD commented on by academic writers does not form part of contemporary practice descriptions	Change continues as the constant feature of OD roles. HRD is a significant character of OD (or is it the other way round?). Strategic orientation and effectiveness / performance become increasingly important. The form of UK OD includes a mix of 'soft' and 'hard' HRM (as described by Storey, 1992)

**Table 5. The research questions, the findings and the relevant dimension of PET.**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Relevant Dimension of Population Ecology Theory (PET)</b>
There is a positive indication of significant growth in the OD in UK HRM population (see total number of job roles in Table 4)	Evolution (Sahlins and Service,1960; Boyd and Richardson (1985)
With the significant growth, the density of the UK OD population demonstrates legitimacy and the population is therefore likely to survive (see total number of job roles in Table 4)	Density dependence (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Hannan et al., 2007)  Age Dependence (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Hannan et al., 2007)
The form of the current UK OD population is a broad niche generalist / holistic form (see content analysis results in Table 3)	Population, forms and fuzzy boundaries (Carroll and Hannan, 2000)  Inertia and change; adaption and stability (Hannan et al., 2007)  (Sahlins and Service, 1960) Niche width (Hannan & Freeman, 1977) Resource partitioning (Carroll, 1985)