

## **Barriers to the Success of HRD Internships in Morocco**

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*This study examines and proposes alternatives to the challenges encountered by Human Resource Development students at Al Akhawayn University in Morocco, which hinder the success of their internship programs and the effective implementation of HRD practices in the country. Student interns fail to acquire the necessary experiential skills inherent in the practice of HRD due to these barriers which eventually prompt them to change careers. Very few literature have been found regarding this matter, and this gap indicates neglect on the importance of HRD internship and its relevance to the institutionalization of HRD practices in the country*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Morocco is a developing country confronted with high rates of illiteracy and unemployment related to the development of workplace expertise and the emergence of Human Resource Development (Cox, Estrada, Lynham, & Motii, 2005). Chalofsky (1989), defined human resource development (HRD), as the integral use of training and development, career development, and organization development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness. As an academic program, HRD has been found dominantly in the United States, but have started emerging more often, in developing countries (McLean, 2015).

HRD in Morocco is relatively new and primarily of American origin (Metcalf & Reese, 2005). Cox & Arkoubi (2005) reported that about 65% of training in Morocco, are delivered by external consultants. However, there is the difficulty for Western HRD consultants to introduce the discipline of HRD in the Moroccan business environment. First, there is a language barrier (English vs. French and Arabic), and second and more compelling, are the restrictive Moroccan culture and workplace values characterized by its high power distance and uncertainty avoidance scores which discourage the introduction of Western ideas into their social system. There is a need to train and develop HRD professionals from within the country, who understand the culture and are capable of improving human performance in organizations.

With the objective of producing graduates who will eventually become HRD practitioners and scholars, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco (AUI), adopted HRD as an undergraduate program in its academic curriculum under its School of Humanities and Social Sciences. The program requires an internship, which is the training and experience component of the curriculum (Merritt, 2008). An active internship experience is mutually beneficial to both the intern and the workplace; the students acquiring the knowledge and competence inherent in the practice of HRD, while they provide inexpensive help,

new ideas, and a talent pool from which future full-time employees may be drawn (Cannon & Arnold, 1998).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students place considerable importance on obtaining meaningful internship experience, primarily as a means of gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace for future jobs (Merritt, 2008). There are problems, however, that HRD students encounter while in pursuit of these goals. These problems create barriers to the success of their experiential learning, which is critical not only to the success of the HRD Program but also to the institutionalization of HRD practices in Morocco. They become obstacles to the students' learning process, prompting many to lose their interest in an HRD career and instead, pursue other fields of interest. This phenomenon leaves the country devoid of the opportunity to produce and develop HRD practitioners who can facilitate the development and institutionalization of HRD practices, necessary for improving human performance in Morocco.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the internship experiences of HRD students in Morocco and learn how their experiences shape their perceptions about HRD and their future career decisions. It attempts to identify and investigate the barriers that inhibit the success of HRD internships in the public and private sectors. Furthermore, it tries to determine the magnitude and depth of the problem and its implication to the practice of HRD in the country.

Incidental to this purpose, is to give recognition and voice to a neglected group, the HRD student interns, who are under-represented in HRD literature. There is the absence of research regarding this group of individuals, and this gap indicates neglect on the importance of HRD internship and its relevance to the advancement of HRD practices in the country. We overlook the value and importance of these individuals who are the first line of defense in the HRD profession. Being indifferent to their concerns drives them to deviate away from an HRD career and instead pursue different fields of interest. Some of these interns may have the necessary skills and qualifications to become productive HRD professionals and scholars in the future. This study intended to answer the following:

1. What are the barriers to the success of HRD internships in Moroccan public and private organizations?
2. What is the impact of these barriers on the student's experiential learning process and the institutionalization of HRD activities in Morocco?
3. What constitutes a quality HRD internship experience?

## **THE CONTEXT OF HRD INTERNSHIPS IN MOROCCO**

Located in Northern Africa, Morocco is a developing country modernizing business practices to become more competitive in the emerging global economic environment (Cox et al., 2005). It has a population of 33.9 million, 59% of which, falls within the 15 to 55 years age bracket (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Morocco's human development index (HDI) ranks 123rd out of 188 countries, indicating that its social and economic development levels are low (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). With a literacy rate of 68.5% and an unemployment rate of 9.4% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016), the need to develop Morocco's human resources through education and training is evident and necessary for the country to become globally competitive.

In one of his lectures to HRD students at Al Akhawayn University in November 2012, Gary Mclean, a leading HRD scholar, and international HRD consultant stated; "Morocco has such a great potential for global competitiveness, but it needs to develop its human capital. This need calls for a concerted effort of all sectors of society to develop a unified strategy that will address these issues- a challenge for HRD practitioners and professionals." McLean (2006), earlier found, that in Morocco, there is an important role for HRD in a national context.

HRD in Morocco is functioning at the very basic and embryonic stage and is being implemented only at its administrative level (Benson & Arkoubi, 2006). Cox et al. (2005), reported the almost complete absence of academic literature in the country to even define the term conceptually. As such, there is an unclear distinction between the terms human development (HD), human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) in the world of practice in Morocco (Cox. et al., 2005).

### **Al Akhawayn University**

Al Akhawayn University (AUI) is a Moroccan university that adopted an American based education system, where the medium of teaching is English, and the Liberal Arts system is strongly encouraged. It is an independent, public, not-for-profit coeducational university committed to educating the future citizen-leaders of Morocco and the world. Inaugurated in 1995 by His Majesty King Hassan II and Crown Prince Abdallah bin Abdel-Aziz of Saudi Arabia, Al Akhawayn University redefines the classic American liberal arts educational experience on an architecturally stunning modern campus in the city of Ifrane, amidst the beauty of the Moroccan Middle Atlas Mountains (Al Akhawayn University, 2016). It is Morocco's first university that follows the American higher education system with regards to its curriculum structure and delivery. Al Akhawayn University hires a significant number of international faculty, coming from countries in North America, Europe, and Asia, while most Native Moroccan professors, earned their graduate and doctoral degrees likewise from renowned academic institutions in North America and Europe.

### **The Human Resource Development Program at AUI**

In response to the growing need for professionals capable of developing human expertise and improving human performance in organizations, AUI initiated the development of an undergraduate Human Resource Development (HRD) program. The objective is to prepare graduates to assume roles as trainers, performance improvement specialists, and organizational change consultants in businesses and public sector organizations (Al Akhawayn University, 2013). The University created the HRD program after expression of interest by Moroccan business leaders and government officials as a strategic need in bringing human resources to a higher level in a more competitive economic environment (Cox et al., 2005). The program belongs to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) which serves the entire university by providing students with exposure to the intellectual skills and training that are the essence of a Liberal Arts education. The University hires U.S. trained and experienced HRD faculty to augment the existing local experts in the field. Intervention of international HRD specialists and consultants, as well as collaboration with American universities with established HRD programs of education likewise strengthens its HRD programs.

The program requires HRD students to take foundational courses in training and development, career development, and organization development, processes that increase the capacity of human resources (McLagan, 1989). The students have the opportunity to specialize and focus on a specific career by taking modules in Strategic HRD, Leadership and Management Development, HRD Consulting, Organizational Development & Change, Needs Assessment, and Organizational Effectiveness (Al Akhawayn University, 2013). These courses expand the students' knowledge and learn the culture of a given career (McClean and Akdere, 2015).

The intended learning outcomes of the AUI HRD program conforms with Chalofsky's definition of HRD, which allows students to understand HRD as a professional field of practice, where they can acquire skills in developing human expertise through training and development, organizational development, and career development. These outcomes are designed to promote better corporate management practices, efficient management development, and improved leadership in the Moroccan organizational community. While other universities in Morocco offer human resource management (HRM) courses where HRD issues are addressed at an introductory level, only AUI has an HRD-specific program in the country (Cox et al., 2005).

## **HRD Internship**

Internship links the theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom to its applications in the workplace. It is an essential component of higher education that benefit the students, the employers, and the universities (Verney, Holoviak, & Winter, 2009) and plays a significant role in preparing students for their future careers. Firms find this as a convenient source from which future employees can be selected (Hurst & Good, 2010).

AUI's HRD Program requires all its students to engage in an internship for eight weeks averaging thirty-six (36) hours per week. It is usually taken during summer, and upon completion of the student's junior year. The University provides the students a start-up package, detailing the guidelines, procedures, schedules, and the code of conduct of the internship. The package includes a set of documents (Internship Proposal, Internship Agreement, and Internship Evaluation) for a three-party contract to be signed by and between the school, the student, and the workplace. The package defines two types of the internship;

- 1) "Established Institution," where AUI students have previously interned and are institutions with which AUI has ongoing relationships;
- 2) "Innovative Project," where students are free to conduct internships in firms of their choice wherein AUI has not yet developed an established relationship. Students are encouraged to seek out new opportunities with these innovative projects.

Upon completion of their internship, each student is required to submit a written report of about 15 to 20 pages detailing their accomplishments recorded in learning diaries and journals where their daily interactions and activities are logged in. These journals provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, skills, and abilities (Young & Baker, 2013).

Interns are also required to deliver a 15- minute oral report covering important aspects of their internship experiences before an HRD evaluation committee composed of the HRD Coordinator and one HRD faculty who are responsible for evaluating their performance and progress.

Finally, students are required to complete a capstone project, which is an HRD intervention based feasibility study. This project requires students to examine the practices of a company then propose HRD intervention activities to initiate improvements. Young & Baker (2013), explains that internship programs provide excellent capstone experiences, since they serve as the foundation, and are material and relevant in developing and completing the capstone project.

Students exposed to real-life scenarios are expected to engage in the practice of their field and share the knowledge and skills they learned in school. It allows both the intern and the company, the opportunity to determine if the intern possesses the qualities to become a good HRD practitioner, which in essence, is a valuable recruiting tool (Coco, 2000). It aids students in identifying, clarifying, developing career goals and professional aspirations, and confirming career-path options (Meritt, 2008).

Students become familiar with corporate structures and work processes in an organization. They are expected to learn the discipline and the work ethics required for an HRD job. They work with and learn from experienced professionals giving them the opportunities to interact, associate, and develop relationships with experts in the fields of human resources development. These experiences increase students' maturity levels and improve their self-confidence and self-concept (Merritt, 2008),

## **Barriers to the Success of HRD Internship**

It is important for the students, the University, and the internship sites to understand the expectations and objectives of internship programs to be able to maximize the intern's learning process. This understanding ensures a smooth transition of the individual from being a student to being a professional. Through proper guidance by corporate mentors, student interns learn the realities of the work environment that will eventually give them a competitive advantage in the job market. There are, however, problems encountered that challenge the students' commitment to achieving their goals.

### *Selection of Internship Sites*

At the beginning of their internship, HRD students report having difficulties finding organizations to accommodate them. Although AUI provides a list of possible organizations, students rely on their

network and find internship sites on their own. Most of the time, students end up doing internships in small and medium-sized organizations where HRD is an unfamiliar concept. These organizations offer fewer and lower-quality learning opportunities (Haimson & Bellotti, 2001), due to their lack of knowledge about HRD and the fact that the only available work is purely clerical. One HRD Intern, for example, reported that she was assigned to organize slides for historical archiving. Clerical work does not provide opportunities for HRD students to assimilate their classroom learnings into practice since clerical work is not the nature of HRD. Traditional Moroccan managers with autocratic leadership styles usually run these organizations. They deny the interns the freedom to negotiate or demand a more appropriate internship related to their objectives. For many interns, performing routine administrative tasks is a convenient way of complying with the internship requirement. They opt to commit themselves to these tasks even if it is not in line with the objectives of the HRD program.

Organizations, on the other hand, accommodate and appreciate this commitment due to the inexpensive clerical help that they get from the students. Weisser (2013), explains that organizations should be talking about what they will do for the intern and not the other way around. Hergert (2009), argues that internship sites should provide the appropriate structure and integrate the internship experience with the academic background of the student. Students admit that many of their written and oral reports did not reflect the actual work done during the internship.

#### *Access to HRD Functions*

Although most of the students find an internship in HRM offices, they do not have access to HRD related activities such as in training and development or performance management. They end up doing personnel administrative work such as organizing employee folders and tracking attendance. Internship agreements which include the objectives and the HRD related tasks are not followed. Students find themselves on the losing end, while organizations get the most benefit. Students working in these firms are not able to meet their internship goals. Rangan & Natarajarathinam (2014), found that if the intern's interests and business' objectives match, it is a win-win scenario for all parties.

#### *HRD versus HRM*

AUI students expressed difficulty in relating to HRD which they attribute to the lack of knowledge and understanding in the workplace about this field of expertise. The concept of HRD overlaps with the functions of HRM, which in the Moroccan business community, are believed to be the same. Cox, et al., (2005), found that HRD and HRM are typically combined in the same functional unit in Moroccan businesses. This concept is likewise retained in schools without HRD programs, where there is trouble even among faculty, in distinguishing HRD from HRM (Cox et al.,(2005). Training and performance management, for example, would be included as a topic within HRM courses. Furthermore, the concept of HRD is of Western origin, and it does not readily fit into the context of Moroccan organizations that have been molded after French firms and are structured to serve the French market (Ali and Wahabi, 1995). In France, HRD is not distinguished from HR but is systematically seen as being part of HR (McLean, 2010).

There were also reports that supervisors impose on their interns, their concept of what they believe to be "HRD," when in effect they were referring to HRM. The disconnect between the two terms consistently creates animosity in the workplace as students are overwhelmed by the insistence of their handlers as being "experts" in "HRD" because of their HRM degree or their experience working in the HRM offices. Many interns are disillusioned by the definition of HRD as opposed to HRM, simply because of the workplace's lack of awareness regarding the former's concept about the latter. The students have difficulty relating what they learn and what they know, to what they see and what they hear in the workplace. HRD, therefore, loses its identity and essence as it translates to be accepted merely as an integral function of HRM

Interns feel the discomfort, but they opt to keep quiet instead of constructively discussing the issues with their superiors. They tend to withdraw in silence and just do whatever they are asked to do. Moroccan individuals in traditional Moroccan families, are submissive and are not willing to initiate

change (Ali and Wahabi, 1995). They are taught to obey and are expected to listen to their elders and authority figures. Some use this as a defense mechanism in dealing with the cold treatment and disinterest shown to the interns by their superiors or handlers.

### *The Language Barrier*

The language used in the Moroccan workplace is French while students write their journals and reports in English. French companies mold Moroccan organizations and managers are educated and trained using the French language and business literature (Ali & Wahabi, 1995). This workplace attribute creates difficulties for interns to communicate with superiors and co-workers regarding HRD issues and terminologies. Furthermore, the students' lack of business knowledge (not being an integral part of the HRD curriculum) makes it difficult for them to understand technical business terms that they often hear in the workplace.

### *The Moroccan Culture and the Workplace Value System*

It is important to understand how the Moroccan managerial value system impacts the hierarchal relationships in the workplace since interns are exposed to a hierarchal environment where they are required to report to a person in authority. Morocco's power distance rating is considerably high at (70), indicating that it is a hierarchal society where subordinates have strong dependency needs and expect superiors to act autocratically (Hofstede, 1980). Interns are ranked lowest in the organizational hierarchy, by the nature of their "temporary employment" where they will have to relate with experienced and seasoned employees from whom they expect to learn. This relationship is a challenge for the interns considering that Moroccan managers possess 'command and control' attitudes (Gibb, 2011), and practice centralized decision-making processes that discourage employee participation (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2007).

Student interns are valuable contributors to the organization's mission. They bring new knowledge and technical skills that more seasoned employees may not possess (Szadvari, 2008). However, when voicing out their observations and ideas relevant to HRD, interns report getting stiff resistance from their superiors and co-workers, especially from those who have served the company longer. Senior supervisors and employees become offensive, asserting their correctness due to their long-term practice in the field. They refute student's observations and suggestions. The interaction creates strained relationships between the interns and the handlers, which defeats the purpose of the interns being able to relate with experts in fields of keen interest to them (Meritt, 2008). Ali & Wahabi (1995), explained that egocentric managers were found among those who spent years in their current positions but failed to progress in their careers. Thus, assertiveness and disregarding others' feelings reinforced their daily work life. Although AUI students follow a western approach to education, they are still Moroccans in faith, and in culture and will continue to adhere to their Moroccan values.

HRD involves skill acquisition, self-actualization and modernization that centers upon improving individuals, organizations, and society through a developmental process maximizing individual potential (Harbison and Myers, 1969). These are the opportunities that HRD can bring to Morocco to spearhead its quest for global competitiveness. Students learn this in school, and as interns, they are enthused to introduce what they learn and see it work in the organizations where they have internships. They hope to be able to initiate HRD practices as it brings about greater organizational efficiencies and effectiveness that link to the goals of the organization (Mcguire, 2010).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used the narrative research approach, which is best in capturing the full stories and life experiences of a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2006). While the narrative approach may suggest a sample size of only one to two observed cases (Gutterman, 2015), to develop rich and meaningful collective stories, this study collected data from seven (7) participants who expressed their willingness to participate through written consent and upon the assurance of anonymity. The procedures for this research

consisted of focusing on studying the individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, and reporting personal experiences (Creswell, 2006). This approach required the authors to collaborate with the participants to ensure the accuracy of information.

### **Profile of Participants**

The authors resorted to using purposive sampling in the selection of the participants in this study. All the participants who volunteered for this study graduated from Al Akhawayn University with a degree in HRD. They all engaged in and completed their internships with different public and private organizations in Morocco while in their junior or senior years. Data obtained reflected their collective internship experiences covering a four-year period beginning 2012 to 2016, taken from oral and written reports presented by the students in compliance with the requirements of the HRD Program.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

This study used three methods in collecting data. First, the authors took notes during the students' oral presentations. Since interns worked for different companies with different work environments, it was imperative to look for recurring themes as they relayed their stories. The authors carefully listened and were particular in sorting out significant issues broached by the participants, that established a commonality of the experiences among the presenters.

Second, the authors collected written internship and capstone reports including learning diaries and work journals. The authors then examined the documents, reconstructed the stories and again identified common themes that emerged.

Finally, informal interviews were conducted through online and face to face interaction using a mixture of English, French, and Moroccan Dialect. The conversations provided opportunities for interviewees to add relevant information to the key elements to help the interviewers generate in-depth feelings and impressions about their experiences.

In analyzing the data, the authors took into consideration, the participant's level of integration in the workplace, their learning experiences, their overall reflection on the internship, and finally their critical assessment of the experience. The reports told stories of the participants' experiences which were first, examined, then compared with each other to identify similarities and differences. Through the construction and reconstruction of personal stories, (Webster and Mertova, 2007), recurrent words and expressions eventually developed into themes. The themes were reorganized into a general framework then analyzed for key elements (Creswell, 2006). The result was a consolidated summary of information which was then discussed with the participants, allowing them to participate in evaluating the themes and adding a validation check to the analysis (Creswell, 2006).

### **Trustworthiness**

In establishing trustworthiness in this study, the researchers cross-validated the data obtained by consulting with some of the interns for clarification of their story, giving them the opportunity to provide context and an accurate interpretation (Patton, 2002). Both narrative and the thematic analysis of the stories were sent back to the interviewees as a form of a check. In return, the respondents provided their views on what they agreed with and what they thought needs to be re-analyzed considering that they have the detailed information about the context in which the experiences occurred (Loh, 2013).

## **SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

The reports shared by HRD interns yield results indicative of the low quality of HRD internship in Morocco. Students expect to obtain meaningful and worthwhile internship experiences that will enable them to eventually land in jobs in their field of interest and also gain a competitive edge in the marketplace for new jobs (Cannon & Arnold, 1998). However, there were problems encountered that prevented the students from achieving these goals.

1. In selecting internship sites, students have difficulty finding the right organization to suit their needs. Consequently, students choose firms regardless, whether or not, they are engaged in HRD activities. Others end up in HRM offices that do not give them access to HRD related functions. In either case, students find themselves performing clerical or administrative tasks that are not related to the objectives of the HRD Internship. Because employers gain inexpensive clerical help from the students, they tolerate this type of an arrangement even if the work done violates provisions of the internship agreements. Since there is no direct and interactive relationship between the university and the internship site except through the student interns, this type of internship activities continue unmonitored and are assessed solely on the interns' written reports which do not reflect the actual work done by the interns. There is no real commitment between the student and the internship site, to ensure that objectives of the internship are met. Interns should be accepted as a functional member of the organization's staff and integrated into all appropriate activities and programs ( Young & Baker, 2004). In this manner, the students will not lose the valuable experiences that they need to sustain their interest in HRD.
2. Moroccan HRM managers and practitioners engage students in arguments regarding the definition and functions of HRD. The issue continues to be unresolved since no formal statement as to the meaning of the terms has been adequately established. Complicating this matter is the fact that the definition of HRD is written from the U.S American point of view (Ruona, 2000), which is a Western concept that Moroccans may find hard to embrace considering their cultural background that has a French influence. Cox et al. (2005), explains that the term HRD is not consistently used in Morocco, but related concepts, such as vocational education and training, are used instead. HRD being a new concept creates uncertainty and ambiguity, that threatens the workplace considering Morocco's high uncertainty-avoidance score of 68 (Hofstede, 1980). Managers would stick to what they believe in the formal rules of HRM, not tolerate HRD, in what they may consider being deviant ideas and behavior (Hofstede, 1980),
3. In Morocco, French is the language of business, government, and diplomacy (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). The use of the French language over English in the Moroccan business community affects the intern's ability to introduce HRD concepts which are of American origin. Students learn about HRD as it is taught in American English. When in the workplace, they find difficulty articulating its context, which adds to the resistance that they receive from employers. Difficulty in communicating the concept of HRD is also a problem of foreign HRD consultants. This barrier is the main reason why very few international HRD scholars-practitioners attempt to introduce HRD in Morocco.
4. This study shows evidence that Moroccan culture and workplace values are concerns that must be addressed to ensure the success of HRD internships. Ali (1990), found that values are related to decision style, strategic action, innovation, creativity, commitment, managerial satisfaction, and organizational competitiveness which are crucial for managerial and organizational effectiveness. Morocco's high power distance explains the autocratic management style that inhibits interns from expressing themselves, while its high uncertainty avoidance score creates the resistance to learning and adoption of Western HRD concepts. These are the two cultural dimensions that must be adequately addressed for HRD to develop in the Moroccan business community. Morocco's high power distance prevents students from expressing themselves. Likewise, they cannot expect to be consulted, or granted participation in projects or decision-making activities. These are some of the issues that frustrate HRD interns, considering that HRD involves processes that deal with intervention and consultancy. At this level, HRD students see and feel the futility of pursuing an HRD career.

This study identified issues that compromise the training of HRD student interns prompting them to veer away from pursuing an HRD career. HRD students experience a disconnect between the theory and practice of HRD due to the unfavorable experience they encounter during internships. The issues appear to be endemic to government and private organizations in Morocco, with the Moroccan culture and



workplace value system significantly influencing the behavior of interns. The prolonged and sustained effect of these barriers continues to drive away HRD students from pursuing an HRD career. It is, therefore, a challenge for HRD scholar-practitioners to develop strategies that will overcome these barriers and facilitate the establishment of a healthy internship environment in the Moroccan workplace.

## CONCLUSION

HRD internship is the first step towards developing future trainers and organizational change consultants. It is at this stage where the interest in an HRD career is developed and nurtured. It is, therefore, imperative for universities to directly assist their interns in assessing the workplace for the existence of an HRD environment to ensure that students find placements where they can fulfill their personal goals (Merritt, 2008). While students are at liberty to choose their internship sites, a closer and more rigorous control in the selection process must be applied. The work relationships and the internship responsibilities should be defined, detailed, and agreed upon by the employer, the student, and the university. Weisser (2013), provided guidelines for high-quality internships. Among the salient points that he mentions are:

- 1) That the internship should focus on the education and not the work;
- 2) Teach interns skills that can be used outside the company;
- 3) Companies looking for interns should tell the intern what they will learn, not what they will do;
- 4) Internships are not about jobs; they are about personal growth.

Interns should examine the effectiveness of the internship site and evaluate their skills and on-the-job learning throughout the internship experience to determine whether their field experience met their expectations. There should be counter-checking and verification of completed HRD activities by both the university and the internship site. On the other hand, supervisors should meet individually with the interns to discuss their performance evaluation about each of the pre-established goals and objectives. Young and Baker (2004), proposed that using two appraisals with sufficient amount of time between them, allows the interns to demonstrate improvement in their performance of the assigned responsibilities. This method ensures accurate reporting and documentation that shows the interns meeting their objectives and gaining the right knowledge and experience in HRD.

In preparing reports, Young & Baker (2004), suggests seven components that interns should include:

- 1) A description of the agency with an emphasis on the specific unit to which the intern was assigned (or spent the most hours);
- 2) A description of the intern's initial objectives for the internship program, with commentary on the degree to which each objective was met;
- 3) An overview of the responsibilities that were performed and the extent of administrative and leadership opportunities;
- 4) A description of specific contributions that the intern made;
- 5) An analysis of professional and personal challenges;
- 6) An analysis of professional and personal growth; and
- 7) A list of recommendations and improvements for future interns who are placed at the site.

Students reported that the best place to experience the processes of HRD and see it working in practice is in multinational corporations' HR departments. Multinational companies can be credited with successfully replicating training programs in their overseas subsidiaries (Dowling, Welch, & Schuler, 1998). The University needs to help students identify and closely coordinate with these organizations, establish relationships and commitments with them, and assist the student interns in laying out the foundation for their HRD internships. Formal educational objectives must be developed along this line to guide the activities associated with the internship and to maintain the credibility and integrity of the program (Young & Baker, 2004)

AUI student interns are native Moroccans educated and trained in HRD, who speaks French and Arabic and understand the Moroccan culture. They are in the best position to introduce and promote HRD

in Morocco. The primary objective of AUI in integrating the HRD program into their curriculum; is to develop their HRD students to become future trainers, performance improvement specialists, and organizational change consultants in businesses and public sector organizations (Al Akhawayn University, 2013). It is interesting to note that all the participants in this study, graduated with an HRD degree, but none have been or are currently employed in the actual practice of HRD. Some pursued employment and graduate studies in another field, while others worked in HRM offices performing administrative tasks. The irony of this scenario is that the very purpose of HRD fails at its entry-level into the Moroccan human development system,

### **Significance of the Study**

The participants in this inquiry expressed their feelings regarding their predicament. While they show interest to resolve the issues, they had difficulty communicating their concerns to the right parties. This research took the initiative to represent and give voice to these interns who voluntarily participated in the study hoping that “there will still be light at the end of the tunnel” where concerned parties will listen and propose corrective actions to rectify the discrepancies. The HRD interns in this study have moved on, but there is plenty of work to be done to lay down the foundation for an improved internship program where future students may benefit.

The current state of HRD practice in Morocco is at its basic, with very slow growth that affects the development of the country to become globally competitive. Contributing to this phenomenon is the lack of Moroccan HRD specialists who can promote and facilitate the establishment of HRD processes in the Moroccan workplace, that will establish a conducive and productive internship environment for HRD students. This gap is critical and must be addressed by both Moroccan and international HRD professionals. With the absence of initiatives geared towards understanding the need for promoting the practice of HRD in the Moroccan work environment, Morocco will continue to lose potential HRD practitioners and professionals, represented in this study by the student interns, who are prompted to change careers after their HRD internship experience failed to meet their expectations.

### **Implications for HRD Practice**

Internships are opportunities for students to gain valuable experience by being able to apply the knowledge they learned in school to real-world scenarios. In Morocco, however, HRD students from AUI find themselves in work environments with little or no support for the practice of HRD, denying them the opportunity to integrate what they learn in school into practice. What contributes to this failure is the lack of aggressiveness of international HRD scholar-practitioners to introduce the discipline of HRD into the Moroccan business environment. Alheiji and Garavan (2016), explained that the lack of theoretical and empirical knowledge of HRD in North African countries makes it very difficult to inform Western managers on how best to design and implement HRD practices. These HRD specialists need to overcome first and foremost, the language barrier (English vs. French and Arabic), and second and more compelling, are the restrictive Moroccan workplace values influenced by the Moroccan culture characterized by high power distance and uncertainty avoidance that resists the introduction of western ideas into their system. Javidian, Stahl, Brodbeck, & Wilderom (2005), argues that cultural differences per se do not create problems, rather, it is the way it is managed.

There is a need for HRD scholar-practitioners to undertake a more intensive and in-depth study to understand and manage the Moroccan culture and workplace values relative to HRD. Intervention by international scholars and practitioners must be rigorous and must include strategic plans and activities to overcome the social and cultural challenges that serve as the barriers to the success of HRD internships. Results of these studies may pave the way for the interns, the University, and the internship sites to develop an ideal scenario where student interns would benefit much from their internship, prompting them to explore their interests and eventually pursue HRD careers. Since these interns are native Moroccans, who speak English, French, and Arabic, and understand the Moroccan culture, they are the best people who can introduce and promote human resource development in the country. Some of them will eventually become what Al Akhawayn University advocates them to be, trainers, performance

improvement specialists, and organizational change consultants in businesses and public sector organizations. But without the aggressive intervention of international HRD practitioners and scholars, to pave the way for this development, HRD in Morocco will continue to move at its current pace and HRD as an academic program, might eventually lose its steam.

According to Mclean (2015), HRD has a unique role to play for developing countries because its focus is on maximizing the potential of human expertise in organizations. There is a need to learn from best practices internationally, but a thorough understanding and adaptation of the Moroccan culture would also be required.

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