The philosophy and practice of training and development: the case of the Jordanian electricity sector

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This study aimed to gain an understanding of training and development (T&D) as a philosophy and practice in Jordanian electricity companies and to explore factors that shape T&D. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis. Results indicate that T&D was interpreted in terms of learning, was development focused and emphasized a utilitarian outlook. The T&D role was perceived as being ‘instrumental’, showing an inclination towards a functionalist philosophical perspective. T&D activities were found to have a reactive role, designed to meet particular or short-term needs. Findings support the general argument proposed in the human resource development literature about the role of T&D philosophy in guiding actions, but also indicate that the way of thinking about T&D is shaped through the prism of ‘situation needs’ and T&D ‘utility’. Furthermore, this study argues that the perceptions, understanding and application of T&D are shaped in the crucible of industry and organizational internal specification.

Introduction

The general assumption underpinning the practice of human resource development (HRD) is that organizational performance depends on workforce performance. This stream of view champions HRD as a means of organizational success. Conversely, there is considerable debate opposing this rationale. For example, the critical theorists reject the perception of HRD as a one-sided construction that serves capital; they promote a more humanistic approach to HRD (Fenwick, 2005; Sambrook, 2009). Critical HRD’s concern is to transform HRD practices towards justice, fairness and equity (Fenwick,
The debate extends to include the purposes attached to HRD, either a ‘performative’ focus, which is related to performance improvement, or a ‘learning’ focus, which is related to personal growth (Stewart et al., 2010), or both (Nadler & Nadler, 1989).

In the field of HRD, the philosophical perspective refers to perceptions, thoughts and assumptions about HRD’s concept and role, as well as the value that is placed on HRD (Garavan et al., 2007; McGuire et al., 2001; Ruona & Lynham, 2004). It is acknowledged that considering HRD philosophical perspectives is a critical issue in understanding what is expected from it and therefore how it should be managed (Hull & Shunk, 1966; Kuchinke, 2004; McGuire et al., 2001; Ruona & Lynham, 2004; Swanson, 2001). On the other hand, Abdullah (2009) states that the theoretical context of HRD is greatly influenced by the scope of HRD activities. As such, HRD or any of its components are best studied by investigating three main themes: the concept, perceived role and practice.

Most of the available Arab studies have revealed that there is a deficiency of HRD ‘performance’ compared with Western models. However, the Arab philosophy of HRD and the conceptual logic that governs its interventions have not received the same interest. Furthermore, there has been little attention paid to why HRD was constructed in this particular manner. Therefore, this paper fills the gap by focusing on one of the HRD components, which is training and development (T&D). This paper attempted to gain an understanding of T&D as a philosophy and as a field of practice in Jordanian electricity companies through exploring three basic themes – concept, perceived role and practice – and to illustrate the drives that shape T&D. It does this through an exploratory research approach. Data were gathered through 29 in-depth interviews, 34 days of observation and the analysis of companies’ T&D documents.

Research themes

The concept of T&D

The terms ‘training’ and ‘development’ often appear together, and are sometimes used interchangeably. It has been claimed that these activities serve different purposes. Training refers to the activities that aim to equip the person with specific skills and knowledge targeted to adequately perform a particular job (Armstrong, 2006; Fairfield & James, 1987; Hackett, 1997), whereas development refers to a broader landscape. It relates to future and longer term development of people throughout their career (Armstrong, 2006; Currie, 2006; Fairfield & James, 1987; Garavan et al., 1995; Hackett, 1997; Nadler, 1974). T&D, on the other hand, refers to a planned process that aims to maintain and improve employees’ current and future performance by enhancing their ability to perform, changing their attitudes or increasing their skills and knowledge to improve the employees’ and organization’s overall effectiveness (Belhaj, 2000; Buckley & Caple, 1990; United States General Accounting Office, 2004). As mentioned earlier, critical theorists reject the overemphasis on organizational performance and focus on the apprehension of a more rational society that depends on the collective learning of people (McGuire et al., 2001).

T&D roles

In their guest editorial to Journal of European Industrial Training, Stewart and Gold (2011) state that when HRD emerged as a term to encompass a distinct field of enquiry and practice, it adopted a very narrow focus on performance of and in work organizations. Since those early days, a wider range of topics has been introduced resulting in a major shift from an exclusive concern with performance to an increasing interest in learning processes, both individual and collective. This shift illustrates a growing question of the ‘purposes’ attached to HRD practice.

Hamlin and Stewart (2011) present a detailed discussion about various HRD definitions. They argue that HRD has four ‘core purposes’, which are ‘improving individual or group effectiveness and performance’, ‘improving organizational effectiveness and
They add that two or more of these are explicitly or implicitly embedded in the ‘intended purpose’ of every HRD definition analysed.

Hurt et al. (2014) state that HRD is struggling to understand the multiple perspectives within its literature, thus HRD is unclear about its paradigms or it has multiple paradigms. However, McGuire et al. (2001) discuss various HRD paradigms by characterizing five related philosophies: systemic wholism, the managerial perspective, developmental humanism, utilitarian instrumentalism and radical/critical theory.

Systemic wholism endeavours to reach a general understanding and integrative approach to HRD. It has a tendency towards communitarianism and egalitarianism, and perceives the role and needs of individuals within the context of an overall system (McGuire et al., 2001). The managerialist perspective embraces rational use of HRD to achieve organizational objectives through enhancing employees’ proficiency. Developmental humanism is concerned with the individual’s expertise and assumes that individuals should be given a broad degree of self-control and self-regulation, presupposing that they will work towards fulfilling the aims of the organization. Utilitarian instrumentalism advocates the ‘rational’ management of employees, leading to the ultimate aim of increased competitive advantage and shareholder returns. It espouses a close ‘fit’ between HRD and strategic organizational imperatives and that HRD must make a valuable contribution to bottom-line performance. Finally, radical/critical theory seeks a transformation of workplaces and human resource (HR) practices to promote human-level interests of justice and equity (Long, 2007). However, Sambrook (2004) states that attempts to investigate HRD should continue, so that we may understand better, teach it and practise it.

**T&D as a field of practice**

Although there are some limitations to considering T&D as a planned systematic process, various opinions indicate several benefits of doing so. In this context, many frameworks were developed to organize T&D efforts systematically (Anderson, 2010; Armstrong, 2006; Griggs et al., 2010; Hackett, 1997; United States General Accounting Office, 2004). Conventionally, most of these models tend to cover four main stages. The first, training needs analysis (TNA), includes identifying T&D needs at three levels: individual, job/department and organization. The designing and delivery stage involves translation of the determined T&D needs into programmes. The implementation stage involves ensuring effective and efficient delivery of T&D opportunities in the workplace. Finally, evaluation includes assessing whether or not T&D efforts are producing valued output through an efficient and well-managed process (Hackett, 1997). Beevers and Rea (2010) state that T&D evaluation is likely to include validation, which concerns whether T&D objectives have been achieved.

**The strategic approach to T&D**

There is a debate on whether the distinction between HRD and strategic human resource development (SHRD) is useful. For example, Stewart et al. (2010) state that HRD has been distinguished from T&D as being more strategic whereas T&D is more operational; thus, the term HRD already reflects a strategic focus. Conversely, McCracken and Wallace (2000) state that SHRD refers to the creation of a learning culture, in which a range of training, development and learning strategies both respond to corporate strategy and help to shape and influence it. Hamlin and Stewart (2011) state that SHRD is in essence a ‘strategic approach’ to HRD and is not a sub-field inside or a separate field outside the HRD domain.

McCracken and Wallace (2000) propose criteria for SHRD. Their classification is based on Garavan’s (1991) nine characteristics: integration with organizational mission and goals, HRD policies and plans, top management support, line managers’ commitment and involvement, environmental scanning, existence of complementary human
resource management (HRM) activities, expanding trainer role, recognition of culture and emphasis on evaluation. Furthermore, according to the illustrated criteria, McCracken and Wallace (2000) propose an SHRD model that classifies an organization’s HRD activities as being one of the following:

Training. This is where organizations are strategically immature in HRD, and interventions are reactive and based on ad hoc implementation of part of the organization strategy.

HRD. Here, the organization is beginning to develop a maturity in HRD. Generally, this kind of activity could be labelled as T&D, which is reactive and supportive to HRD. Organizations at this level have a systematic implementation role, but show signs of beginning to shape corporate strategy. HRD specialists have an internal learning consultancy role, providing non-standardized services to line managers.

SHRD. Organizations at this stage are more strategically mature in HRD and have a strong learning culture. The HRD is more proactive in shaping and responding to corporate strategy. SHRD specialists have an innovative role as change consultants.

Methodology

The research aims to explore the philosophy and practice of T&D by examining the Jordanian electricity sector and illustrating how T&D was constructed in a specific manner. An exploratory, qualitative approach was chosen for three reasons. First, there is a lack of extensive previous empirical work in the field of T&D in the Arab countries (Abdulrahim, 2011; Altarawneh, 2005; Durra, 1991). Secondly, a survey of the T&D literature in Jordan and the Arab world shows that a great amount of research was conducted on T&D practice, almost totally neglecting the philosophical aspect of the topic (see e.g. Al-Alî, 1999; Al-Athari & Zairi, 2002; Al-Bisher, 2003; Altarawneh, 2005; Bataineh, 2003; Belhaj, 2000; Bu Qefel, 1998). Finally, the review of Arab T&D literature revealed that T&D has been addressed mostly from a positivistic perspective, which reports actions but does not address how or why they occur (see, e.g., Abdalla & Al-Homoud, 1995; Bataineh, 2003; Zubi, 1994). Inadequate pre-existing theoretical material enhanced the need for an exploratory study to generate data for deeper understanding of T&D interventions. Consequently, there is a need to go beyond what is already known and to provide better understanding of factors that stand behind the actions.

As this research is concerned basically with questions of how, the case study approach was utilized. This assumption is compatible with Yin (2003) and Andrade (2009). Secondly, the case study approach facilitates investigation of the phenomenon in its real-life context, as this research aims not only to uncover people’s awareness of T&D but also to describe, explain and clarify T&D as a ‘lived experience’ by participants. Finally, it allows the use of multiple sources of evidence – interview, observation and documents – for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon as well as to validate the research findings.

A sample of three electricity companies was chosen to form the research case according to their activity type, generation, transmission and distribution. Besides selecting the biggest companies in terms of number of employees, firms were also chosen according to form of ownership: public, private and privatized.

Data collection comprised 29 interviews with company employees and 34 days of observation of HRD managers and staff. The in-depth nature of an interview fosters eliciting each participant’s interpretation of his or her experience. Furthermore, interviews allow the research to reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people’s subjective experience and thoughts (Perakyla, 2005). Observation was utilized to enhance the research findings and to avoid some limitations of the interview technique. Particularly, observation was expected to help the researchers understand people’s actions in their real world. Thus, the researchers tried
to capture the following points: the steps taken and procedures followed to nominate employees for T&D programmes, the criteria followed to decide who will attend a specific programme and nomination responsibility. Finally, through observation, the researchers noted the employees’ discussions, conversation, actions and interactions related to T&D, which enhance the researchers’ understanding of the employees’ actual conceptions of T&D and the application of their perceptions.

Moreover, to enrich and validate the research findings, the companies’ T&D documents were analysed: annual reports, training plans, annual training unit reports, monthly training unit reports, training rules and regulations, and the training centre’s plan.

Participants were chosen from different occupations and different managerial levels – senior managers, middle managers, section heads, supervisors and non-managerial staff.

Regarding the interview structure and content, Rubin and Rubin (1995) stress the importance of breaking the overall topic into several related questions in a way that provides unity to the interview. Thus, the main topic of the research was divided into three sections, each aimed at exploring one of the research themes (for the full set of questions, please refer to the Appendix).

The data analysis was conducted in five basic phases: interview analysis, observation analysis, document analysis, company-level analysis (to engender basic patterns and themes for each company) and cross-company analysis (for comparisons).

The analysis started by coding the interviews and getting familiar with the data by reading transcripts repeatedly. Secondly, each interviewee transcript was analysed separately using concept-driven coding techniques and based on the basic themes of the research, which are the conceptualization of T&D, the perceived role of T&D and the actual practice of T&D. Furthermore, each theme has its preset categories and subcategories formulated based on the review of the available T&D literature. For example, in the theme of actual practice of T&D, a category of T&D process was predetermined. This category has the subcategories TNA, designing, implementation and evaluation. At this stage, the ideas that were related to the preset categories were identified. Next, a constellation was made, by grouping words and statements that related to the same central meaning under individual’s patterns, which were located under the related subcategory, categories and themes. The data-driven coding phase was utilized for unplanned issues that emerged through the interviews. In these situations, interviewees’ opinions were labelled according to metaphorical, symbolic or direct meaning. The labelled statements were grouped to form new patterns, which were also coded. Thereafter, patterns were placed under relevant categories, or in other situations, they formed new subcategories or categories.

At the end of each interview analysis, revision of the text was made to ensure no part of the data was ignored and to search for uncoded statements and further meaning, terminology or phrases. The mentioned stages were applied to each interview separately. This method facilitated recognition, identification and understanding the essence of particular individual perceptions wholly and independently, and subsequently the building of coherent themes for each participant.

Afterwards, the interviewees’ analysis output was organized in tables sorted by categories to observe consistencies, differences and contradictions, and to formulate a set of basic themes for each company. Finally, it is important to mention that the analysis process was not always linear, as there was always a constant need to return to the original data to check assumptions or to identify underlying factors.

During the fieldwork, notes were written according to date and time. However, initially, a revision was made to understand the events based on their actual chronology. Then, the notes were identified and coded based on themes that had already emerged from the interview analysis. It is appropriate to mention that although the observation was a very useful technique to build a better understanding of T&D practice and to clarify some ideas, observation did not lead to the construction of new categories. Thus, the ‘ideas’ that were generated from the observation analysis were
added under the appropriate ‘categories’ that had already been determined through the interviews.

T&D document analysis was started by identifying and coding the written statements based on what had already emerged from the interview and observation analysis. Further ideas were identified and coded according to their meaning and purpose; those emergent ideas were clustered to formulate patterns, which were located under relevant categories, or in some cases, new subcategories were formulated.

Thereafter, the basic themes of each company were formulated by pattern matching and comparing the analysis of each method. Comparison was made between companies’ basic patterns and themes so as to engender the similarities and differences among them. Therefore, tables were constructed for each category to verify consistency, matching and discrepancy that appear between the companies, related to each category. Sorting by categories rather than themes gives more focus to the subject and allows more spotlighting of the phenomenon. This stage was carried out to create an overall picture about T&D philosophy and management in the Jordanian electricity industry.

To meet the test of construct validity, two tactics were used: first, multiple sources of evidence were used, and secondly, the researchers had the interview transcripts reviewed by the respondents themselves. On the other hand, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that qualitative writers discuss reliability in terms of conformability of findings, trustworthiness, consistency and dependability of evidence. Consequently, the researchers endeavoured to achieve these points by (1) clarifying the theoretical assumptions that support the choice of research design and methods; (2) identifying the criteria for selecting the cases and participants; (3) providing an explicit outline of interview questions, types of document collected and the main occurrences that were observed; and (4) describing the steps that were followed to conduct the research and the data analysis process.

### Research findings

**The conceptualization of T&D**

Training was defined by participants in terms of learning, with an emphasis on the developmental aspects. The following quotations explain the idea: ‘Learning activities that aim to provide the employees with necessary skills, desired attitudes and required new knowledge’; ‘Training is the activity of educating and developing staff to equip them with new skills and knowledge’. In other words, training was defined in terms of what it is rather than why or when it should be done. The specific purpose of training, which type of skills and knowledge needed to be improved or when the training was required were not highlighted. The purpose of training was assumed to be to help employees contribute to companies’ development. The following quotation explains this point: ‘to improve the employee’s . . . in order to enable them to work with high efficiency’.

In a second and minor pattern, training was defined as managing of knowledge deficiency. Of participants, 16.3 per cent linked the need for training to lack of specific skills, knowledge or ability needed to perform their current job.

Although participants did not provide a unified picture of their perceptions regarding the term ‘development’, the ideas that were extracted indicated that development could be defined according to almost 53.3 per cent of interviewees as progressive improvement as inferred from the words and phrases they utilize, such as ‘Development is moving from good to better’, ‘development never stops’, ‘a broader and higher level of performance’ and ‘farther than that’.

Furthermore, the interviewees’ perspectives revealed that the relation that links training and development is sequential; they conceive that development occurs naturally and logically as a result of continuous and proper training. This relation had been cited by almost 68.3 per cent of participants. Statements like ‘training activities are directed toward development’ and ‘for a broader purpose, which is development’ illustrate that development ought to happen as a result of training. Overall, it could be
argued that participants distinguished between training and development in terms of time frame, but did not identify the distinction in terms of focus and goals. Table 1 illustrates the distinctions drawn by participants between training and development.

Training and development were considered to be more comprehensive when combined from the viewpoint of almost 67.7 per cent of participants. For example, an interviewee stated: ‘T&D is an ongoing process that includes reviewing the progress of work and finding the missing and required skills. T&D is a broader term and more comprehensive than each single term separately’.

Within this pattern, 45.8 per cent of participants conceived T&D as ‘training activities’ to be targeted eventually towards ‘development’. Only 21.9 per cent of participants, representing a second pattern, considered T&D to be a planned, sustained and more comprehensive process that includes current and future needs.

Compared with McGuire et al.’s (2001) schools of HRD, the participants’ perceptions show similarity to the American school, particularly, interpreting T&D in terms of learning being developmental focused and emphasizing the utilitarian outlook that is represented in phrases like ‘to enable them to work with high efficiency’ and ‘better performance’. In this context, Bates et al. (2001) state that the American literature indicated that the purpose of HRD is to enhance learning, human potential and performance in a ‘work-related’ system. This explanation points towards performance orientation, which is compatible with participants’ views.

Participants’ perceptions oscillated between the US school and European school in terms of orientation, as their views considered T&D to have an organizational and/or individual orientation. It is important to clarify here that although participants hinted at the need for individual improvement, the pluralistic perspective that is talked about in the UK literature, such as the political dimension (the contradictory needs of employers and employees), implicit power imbalance, promoting corporate social responsibility and its humanistic and emancipator role (Sambrook, 2004), was not mentioned. A summary of participants’ views compared with US and European schools of HRD is shown in Table 2.

T&D roles and the awareness of the need for and importance of T&D

As this section of the interview consisted of open-ended questions, it is reasonable to suggest that the participants expressed convergent views, meanings and ideas with some differences in the importance ranking. Table 3 summarizes participants’ perceptions regarding the role of T&D.

Participants’ perspectives show a propensity towards a managerialist approach, as they conceived the improvement in job-related skills as the foremost role of T&D in companies’ success. Furthermore, the participants of the public and privatized companies explained the importance of T&D as a means to cope with technology changes. The privatized and the private companies’ employees linked the importance of T&D to appropriate performance of job requirements. It is noticeable that the private company’s interviewees gave the same significance to personal improvement.

The instrumental role of T&D was highlighted again in participants’ perceptions regarding the need for T&D, particularly the participants from the privatized

| Table 1: Participants’ perceived distinctions between training and development |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Training          | Development        |
| Learning process  | Desired result of continuous learning |
| Could be a managed process | Occurs as a consequence and sum of training and experience |
| Short-term focus  | Long-run impact    |
| Training is one step towards development | Development is a broad term that includes training as one part of it |
companies, as they explained the need for T&D in terms of new employees’ orientation, introduction of new technology, promotion to a higher position and managing performance deficiency. The public and the private companies’ participants stressed the need for continuous T&D along with the orientation of new employees. Moreover, participants pointed to the instrumental role of T&D in other situations. The privatized and public companies’ participants assumed that the primary role of T&D in improving the companies’ performance is linked to proper accomplishment of job requirements, whereas the private company respondents claimed that T&D’s role is significantly affected by other factors.

Contrary to what is proposed by the managerialist approach, T&D was not perceived to have an important role in goal achievement from the viewpoint of the privatized and the private companies’ participants, as their answers were divided between ‘goals achievement depends on other factors rather than T&D’ and ‘T&D has a minor role in this issue’. On the other hand, the participants from the public companies ranked these points as second in importance as they argued that goals could be achieved by a qualified workforce.

In terms of McGuire et al.’s (2001) model, the participants’ perceptions fall under the traditional functionalism school, which assumes T&D as a practical problem-solving approach to dealing with organizational problems. Similarly, Sambrook (2004) states that much American HRD literature tends to be dominated by performance orientation and situated within a unitary organization perspective. Furthermore, participants’ views show a slight tendency towards developmental humanism, particularly regarding the enhancement and growth of an individual’s skills and abilities. In contrast, other assumptions of this school, like employees’ broad degree of self-control and self-regulation, were not mentioned.

It is important to clarify that although participants defined training as ‘learning’ activities, they did not articulate the learning ‘focus’, which is assumed to benefit individuals and groups in society as being of equal value and contributing to human emancipation (Stewart & Gold, 2011).

Finally, participants’ views regarding T&D did not reflect the critical theory perspective. Whereas the latter challenges the subjugation of human knowledge, skills and relationships to organizational or shareholder gain (Fenwick, 2005; Long, 2007), participants stress the ‘instrumental’ role of T&D towards organizational objectives. As mentioned earlier, participants linked the importance of T&D to ‘appropriate performance of job requirements’ as well as ‘the improvement in job-related skills’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American school</th>
<th>European school</th>
<th>Participants’ definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental focus</td>
<td>Strategic focus</td>
<td>Developmental focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerialist bottom-line approach</td>
<td>Interpretative holistic approach</td>
<td>Managerialist approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on learning processes</td>
<td>Emphasis on skill acquisition</td>
<td>Emphasis on learning as a means for skill acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational orientation</td>
<td>Individual orientation</td>
<td>Dual orientation – with tendency towards organizational orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured learning methodology</td>
<td>Philosophy for investing in people</td>
<td>Learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian outlook</td>
<td>Humanist outlook</td>
<td>Utilitarian outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly managed</td>
<td>Indirectly managed</td>
<td>Training activities are manageable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRD = human resource development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of T&amp;D</th>
<th>Privatized</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cope with technology changes</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate performance of job requirements</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation to company’s culture</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative way of thinking</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase employees’ morale</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in personal level</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in companies’ success</th>
<th>Privatized</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement to job-related skills</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative way of thinking</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees’ commitment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No role in success</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face the competition</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cope with technology</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid work problems and accidents</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in companies’ performance</th>
<th>Privatized</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked to advancement of employees’ performance</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative way of thinking</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the employees’ morale</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depend on top management support and other factors</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of work problems and accidents</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in goals achievement</th>
<th>Privatized</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depends on other factors</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment of creativity</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor role</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By maintaining qualified staff</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate timing for T&amp;D interventions</th>
<th>Privatized</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation programmes</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of new technology</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading to higher position</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance deficiency</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be constant process</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before any problem</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement policy</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the company strategy</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal areas</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T&D = training and development.
Overall, participants’ thoughts showed inclination to ‘instrumentalism’, which is highly compatible with the traditional functionalism perspective. However, more empirical studies are needed to verify this conclusion. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the participants’ understanding of the T&D concept and role is clearly reflected in the manner related activities are practised, particularly in the following areas.

**Training unit title**
Considering development as an unmanageable process that occurs as a result of learning leads to the relevant units being called training section/department rather than T&D in the privatized and the public companies.

**The strategic role of T&D**
Participants’ views regarding the role of T&D emphasize the instrumental role of T&D. Accordingly, they perceive T&D to play a reactive role and to be developed in a manner that responds to any changes either in technology or in environment. Although participants’ views did not reach the advanced levels, of being more proactive and helping or even shaping the organizational strategy, this designation is almost coherent with the reality.

**Training methods**
Perception of training as general learning activities led to heavy reliance on traditional training techniques like lectures, especially in the privatized and private companies.

**Training cycle**
Failure to think of T&D as managed and planned practice and considering training as separated activities explain why T&D was not handled as an organized process, but confined to the selection of programmes and employees. Other parts of the system, such as designing, delivering, implementation and evaluation, were not formally addressed.

**The practice of T&D**
The practice of T&D was explored through investigating the training process, the strategic position of T&D, obstacles to T&D and factors that shape the practice. The management of the training process was explored through the following dimensions.

**Training needs assessment**
All participants from the privatized and public companies agreed that individual training needs were assessed regularly every year, whereas the job and the company’s training needs were not assessed regularly. This was confirmed by reviewing the Regulatory Instruction of Training Section of the privatized company and the workforce legislation for the public company, which limits the training sections responsibilities to identifying the training needs of companies’ employees annually. Conversely, the public company participants claimed that individual training needs were not assessed based on a specific timetable. It is worth mentioning that the private company does not have formal rules and regulations for training activities.

Regarding methods used to assess individual training needs, 82.5 per cent of interviewees stated that individual needs were identified based on managers’ assumptions. This point was stated explicitly in the Regulatory Instruction of Training Section of the privatized company as it stated: ‘the training department’s responsibility is to circulate the training offers to the relevant department and summarize the department managers’ nominations. Thereafter, referring the nominated candidates’ names to the General Manager for approval’.

Similarly, the Regulatory Instruction of Training Section for the public company stated that: ‘the training section should identify the training needs of various company departments, in coordination with department managers and prepare the annual
training plan. Circulate training offers to the related department and summarize their viewpoints regarding employees’ nomination. Notify the General Manager of candidates for approval'.

Moreover, it was found from the researchers’ observations that when the date of the training programme that was previously listed on the annual training plan is due, the managers were asked to confirm their previous nomination.

Participants explained that the heavy reliance on managers’ nominations is due first to employees’ lack of awareness of the importance of T&D, so it was assumed that employees would choose unrealistic programmes if they were asked. Secondly, the dominant nature of the management style was revealed by the centrality of decision-making in all management aspects. Finally, it is also due to limited financial resources, thus managers were assumed to decide the foremost needs in order to fit with the allocated budget.

Regarding job TNA, over 70 per cent of participants argued that although there was no formal manner to manage it, there were some sporadic efforts to evaluate job requirements and in particular cases, mainly to fulfil the governmental requirements of safety and occupational health for technicians and engineers and some financial certificates.

Similar to job training assessment, there were no formal procedures to assess the companies’ training needs, as assured by 91.6 per cent of participants. Conversely, 25 per cent of interviewees stressed that the requirements of new projects, contracts and introduction of new technology were taken into consideration when preparing the training plan.

Generally, the TNA stage is formally limited to assessment of individual needs, based mainly on managers’ assumptions. This method was criticized by employees as it was considered to be unsystematic, highly subjective and influenced by personal factors rather than the real needs.

The design stage
Participants’ answers show clearly that the privatized and private companies did not carry out on-the-job training. Instead, they depended on external providers to design and conduct training programmes. Furthermore, 30 per cent of the interviewees from the privatized company and one-third from the private company claimed that there were limited efforts to design training programmes in cooperation with external providers, particularly for the group programmes. On the other hand, participants admitted the informal existence of on-the-job training, mainly for the newly recruited employees. Moreover, the official regulations do not assign any tasks to the training section regarding this stage.

Regarding the training methods, it was found that there was heavy reliance on traditional training techniques, particularly regarding the non-technical programmes. In this context, the privatized company’s annual report shows that there were limited training techniques utilized (courses, lectures, workshops and seminars) whereas other types of methods, like simulation, role playing, tutorial or computer-based coaching were not found.

In this context, although the company concentrates mainly on four main training methods, the training department calculates the training hours for training ‘courses’ and ‘lectures’ only, which indicates that ‘workshops’ and ‘seminars’ were not considered to be training activities. This point drew the attention of researchers and they were answered by an article in the travel and transport regulatory instructions, which distinguish between training programmes and official duties. It indicates that training refers to ‘any course or lecture either locally or internationally that aims to equip the employees with new skills without providing an academic certificate’, whereas official duties refer to ‘conferences, workshops, seminars, exploratory trips, or any other similar issue for the purpose of the company interest, either locally or internationally’.

According to the previous definitions, the official regulations indicate the following:

- the scope of training is limited to improvement in skills;
courses and lectures are the only techniques that are formally considered as training; and
the training function is limited to two types of training techniques. This leads to
the conclusion that there is confusion between training as a ‘function’ and training
‘techniques’.

The public company designed and carried out the technical electronic programmes
for its staff and other companies’ trainees through the Electricity Training Centre
(ETC). In designing their technical courses, ETC utilizes several techniques like lec-
tures, workshops and simulators. The public company depended on external providers
cover other areas, like administrative, financial courses and any other technical
programmes that were not provided by the ETC. This point was reported in the
company’s monthly and annual training reports.

The reliance on external providers was confirmed by researchers’ observations. All
the courses that were conducted at the privatized and private companies and over 90
per cent of those at the public company were designed and conducted by external
providers.

Overall, participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the heavy reliance on exter-
nal providers. For example, the courses provided are designed in a general way that
does not suit the participants’ or company’s particular needs. No serious effort is paid
to designing the training courses; moreover, the techniques used depend mostly on
lectures, as they are inexpensive and do not require superior trainer skills. Another
criticism concerned the basis for selecting training centres, as it is affected by personal
relations rather than the capabilities of the centres. This point was considered to be one
of the training problems and obstacles.

Implementation of the acquired T&D knowledge at work (transfer of training)
There was nothing written in the formal training documents that could be related to the
management of this stage. Moreover, the participants’ perceptions regarding this phase
strongly emphasized the nature of the programme rather than the actions that ought to
be followed to ensure the success of this stage.

Evaluation stage
Of the interviewees, 83.3 per cent declared that there was no methodological way to
assess the T&D activities’ outcomes. At the same time, 16 per cent claimed that there
were limited procedures, like calculating the training hours, numbers of trainees and
programmes annually. Moreover, there were some articles in the public and privatized
company’s instruction and regulations that aim to manage the post-training activities,
such as the presentation of training certificates, programme reports and materials of
each trainee. In addition, trainees are required to give a lecture on the acquired
knowledge to their colleagues. Overall, the control activities followed by the privatized
and the public company – as shown in their annual reports – did not determine how
T&D activities actually contributed or affected performance; rather, they indicated the
amounts paid and the programme numbers/hours generated. Furthermore, the control
procedures were targeted to the training programmes only, with no indicators of
evaluation of the other stages of the training process.

The strategic position of T&D
In order to bring a comprehensive picture of training interventions, it seems more
appropriate to figure out the strategic position of T&D activities. In this regard, no
adequate Arab or Jordanian T&D model was found to explore the strategic position of
T&D functions in the electricity sector. No HRD practice map particularly designed for
Jordanian or Arab organizations was set to serve as a comparative base. Hence,
and Wallace (2000) utilized Garavan’s (1991) model of SHRD and they redefine the
dimension of SHRD. For this study, Garavan’s (1991) and McCracken and Wallace’s (2000) models were utilized as a basis for examining the strategic position of T&D.

**Integration with overall organizational goals and strategies**

It was found that none of the investigated companies prepared T&D strategies. Remarkably, 75 per cent of the public company’s participants could not explain the reasons behind the absence of T&D strategy as 62.5 per cent of respondents were confused between the terms strategy and plan and consequently considered them the same. For example, one participant stated, ‘we prepare a training plan . . . aren’t they the same’. Regarding the privatized company, 60 per cent of participants stated that their management is not interested in preparing T&D strategy. Furthermore, it is important to note that the answers were expressed in sarcastic tones. For example, one interviewee stated, ‘Frankly there is no strategy and I don’t even understand the system they depend on . . . Generally there is no belief in training importance . . . Our management considers training as a paid vacation’.

Another point raised by 30 per cent of the privatized company participants and 33.3 per cent of the private company participants refers to HR staff qualification. They claimed that HR staff are not qualified enough to prepare a T&D strategy, whereas 20 per cent of interviewees linked the absence of T&D strategy to the absence of the company’s strategy and HR strategy. In this context, an employee said, ‘The company itself doesn’t have a clear strategy! Accordingly there is no HR strategy! If the basis does not exist, then nothing could be built properly’.

Privatization was another reason for the absence of T&D strategy according to 20 per cent of the privatized company participants. However, they explained it differently as 10 per cent said that each owner has its own agenda that is not related to the employees’ welfare. The other 10 per cent argued that privatization has produced a weak HR department, as the new management is not familiar with the qualified candidates to hire in sensitive positions like HR and development functions.

Overall, the absence of T&D strategy was a common feature in the investigated companies, but with variant explanations, as summarized in Table 4.

Over 80 per cent of the participants argued that there were no links or integration between T&D initiatives and companies’ overall strategy and objectives. This was justified by 37.5 per cent of the public company’s participants by failure of TNA; 25 per cent of participants explained the absence of proper links in terms of the lack of awareness of the importance of training. Forty per cent of the privatized company’s interviewees claimed that the ambiguity of the company’s overall objectives is the reason behind this situation, whereas 30 per cent claimed that the company as a whole

| Table 4: Explanations of the absence of training and development strategy |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| **Explanations**                | **Privatized** | **Public**     | **Private**    |
|                                 | company | company | company |
| Lack of top management interest | 60%     | –        | 33.3%        |
| Lack of HR qualifications       | 30%     | –        | 33.3%        |
| Absence of company strategies   | 20%     | –        | 16.6%        |
| Privatization                   | 20%     | –        | –            |
| Environmental uncertainty       | –       | 12.5%    | –            |
| Poor employee awareness of T&D  | –       | –        | 66.6%        |
| Absence of competition          | –       | –        | 50%          |
| Absence of specialized unit     | –       | –        | 33.3%        |
| Overcentralization              | –       | –        | 33.3%        |
| Confusion between the terms ‘strategy’ and ‘plans’ | – | 62.5% | – |

HR = human resource; T&D = training and development.

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has its strategic objectives, but that the training department is not perceived as strategic enough to be informed about the company’s objectives.

**Integrating T&D plans with the companies’ overall plans**

The privatized and the public companies prepared formal training plans annually. Although the Regulatory Instruction of Training Section of the privatized company has no articles regarding training plan formulation, the training department prepares annual training plans as the researchers were told. The training plans were based on the individual TNA forms, filled in by managers’ departments, collected and organized by the training department/section under the direct supervision of the HR manager. On the other hand, the private company did not prepare a T&D plan; rather, they depended on department managers’ separate requests for training programmes. Overall, because of the complete absence of a training plan for the private company and the lack of any evidence of a link between training objectives and companies’ overall objectives, or how these plans are intended to serve companies’ overall plans for the privatized and the public companies, it is reasonable to assume that there was no proper integration between T&D plans and electricity companies’ overall plans.

**Top management support and commitment**

Over 50 per cent of interviewees claimed that top management was not committed to T&D and not fully convinced that training is a fundamental and essential activity.

Aspects of poor top management commitment were, for example, the way top management deals with training programmes and the distribution bases, which was signified by over 52 per cent of interviewees, stoppage of training, which was pointed out by 36.6 per cent of the privatized company’s participants, and reduction of the training budget and recruitment bases for the training staff. Regarding the private company’s interviewees, the major aspect of lack of top management commitment to T&D is manifested in non-establishment of a training unit and the shortage of allocated money for training activities. In the privatized company, it was found that the training budget represents less than 0.05 per cent of the company’s current budget and 0.003 per cent of the company’s current working budget for the public company.

The private company did not have a separate training budget. Instead, each department assigned its administration expenditure in the annual department budget, which included the cost of training programmes and other administration expenditure; thus, it is not possible to calculate exactly how much the company spent on training. The aspects of top management poor commitment to training are summarized in Figure 1.
The interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the high degree of centralization. Furthermore, the training units’ rules and regulations in the privatized and the public companies limited the authority for nomination to department managers only, conditional on general managers’ approval. Thus, line managers have no role.

### An expanded role for the trainer

This dimension was impossible to assess, because the investigated companies depended basically on external providers. Even in the public company that had its own training centre, this centre was targeted towards technical programmes only.

Other proposed characteristics of strategic HRD were not found, for example:

1. Emphasis on evaluation: there are limited efforts at the privatized and the public companies to evaluate training, whereas there is a complete absence of evaluation procedures at the private company.
2. Existence of complementary HRM activities: as the HR sections/departments in the investigated companies did not have HR and training strategies, it would be impossible to examine the integration and complementarity between them.

Overall, and compared with Garavan’s (1991) and McCracken and Wallace’s (2000) models of SHRD, it is logical to infer that the T&D in the Jordanian electricity industry has a reactive role and ad hoc implementation in relation to companies’ strategy. Furthermore, training staff tend to have an administrative and delivery role. In this regard, according to the written rules and regulations, it is noted that all the tasks assigned to the training departments are service and functional tasks; there is no influential role for the training department staff during the whole training process. Likewise, the researchers noted through observation that the training staff are responsible for extra informal duties. Most of these tasks are considered to be community services, like providing training opportunities for college and university students at diploma and bachelor levels, and organizing field visits for university students to power generators and stations. However, none of these tasks could be considered to be strategic.

### Training problems and obstacles to training

The electricity companies shared almost the same training problems, particularly, poor top management commitment, employees’ lack of willingness to learn, a high degree of centralization, poor quality of external T&D providers and failure to evaluate training outcomes. Table 5 summarizes this issue.

### Table 5: Common training problems and obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived training problems</th>
<th>Privatized company</th>
<th>Public company</th>
<th>Private company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of top management interest</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Poor employees’ willingness to learn</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. High degree of centralization</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Poor quality of external T&amp;D providers</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Failure to evaluate training outcomes</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inadequacy of TNA</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lack of well-qualified HR staff</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Distribution of training activities</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inconsistency of training</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HR = human resource; TNA = training needs analysis; T&D = training and development.

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Factors shaping T&D practices in the Jordanian electricity industry

It is acknowledged that qualitative explanations are not able to specify invariant, deterministic causal relations, because the causal mechanism will be inherently unstable (Spencer et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the following explanations shed some light on the nature and interrelationships of different contributory factors that help to explain why and how outcomes have occurred.

The impact of industry type on T&D practices

Half of the private companies’ participants stated directly that the absence of competition is one of the obstacles to training. Furthermore, 15.3 per cent of the privatized and public companies’ participants stated that the nature and the core business of the organization influence the applicability of training programmes at work, as service companies depend more on training to improve their performance. These indicators direct the attention to the impact of industry type on T&D.

In this regard, it is important to mention that the electricity industry in Jordan consists of seven companies. One company is responsible for transmission, whereas three companies work in distribution, each being responsible for a particular location and separate governorates. Accordingly, in the areas of transmission and distribution, each company is working alone in its respective field. With regard to power generation, there are three companies. One of them produces 70 per cent of electric power generated in Jordan, and it was given a long-term licence to sell bulk supply to transmission companies. The second was established by the government on 26 August 2003 to meet the growing and emergent demand for power in Jordan. Recently, the government permitted the establishment of Al-Manakher power project in 2009 as the first independent power project in Jordan. Accordingly, the transmission and distribution electricity companies were not facing any competition, whereas the generation field is almost monopolized by one company.

However, since the first electricity company was established in 1938, only one independent entity has entered the market. Although three companies were privatized, they were initially established by the government. From this perspective, it is reasonable to assume that the unattractiveness of the electricity sector as an industry, which requires enormous investment, creates a situation of almost full monopoly over the various power aspects, which was an inhibitor to T&D. Overall, the absence of foreseen competition threats in the electricity industry, along with the companies’ strategic goals, has influenced the way training activities are managed. This could explain the lack of interest in constructing a strategic training unit.

The influence of cultural considerations on T&D

Participants claimed that social relations negatively influence T&D in three areas: first, HR staff capabilities; secondly, selection of candidates; and thirdly, selection of T&D providers.

With respect to T&D staff, participants perceived that the deficiency of T&D staff, which affects several aspects of T&D, was the outcome of the appointment policy adopted. For example, in the privatized company, the inefficiency of HR staff was perceived to be one reason for the absence of a T&D strategy. In this regard, 30 per cent of the participants claimed that HR staff were not competent to prepare a strategy. As for the private company, 33.3 per cent of participants claimed that T&D staff did not have the experience to manage the training function properly. It was claimed that the appointment policy was guided by ‘wasta’. (‘Wasta’ is an Arabic word used to describe connection to or influence of a person in a very high or sensitive position.)

Secondly, participants claimed that wasa affected the training process, particularly the TNA stage, with a negative impact on the effectiveness of training activities. In this regard, 52.2 per cent of participants claimed that family, tribe and friendship had direct influence on the selection of trainees.

Thirdly, 50 per cent of private company participants and 12.5 per cent of public company participants argued that the selection of training providers was also affected by personal relations rather than the qualifications and capability of the provider.
However, although the participants emphasized this point on many occasions, they considered the influence of culture as an ‘obstacle’ and a ‘barrier’ to effective training, but at the same time, two-thirds of participants shied away from considering it as a ‘factor’ that shapes T&D perceptions and practices in the electricity sector. It seems that they preferred to consider it as an aspect of absence of a motive and desire to change. In other words, they perceived that the absence of foreseen external threat allowed other considerations to interfere in training, particularly cultural values. In this regard, one participant stated, ‘Training is not being considered seriously, thus it is the best area where managers could fulfill some of their obligations to their families’.

The impact of managerial style on T&D

The data analysis revealed that the investigated companies shared the same management style, which was characterized by low delegation of authority, centrality of decision-making, downward and poor communication channels and a tall organizational structure. These characteristics affected the training interventions in many areas (training unit structure and role, training process and training effectiveness).

Limiting the training decisions to top management caused employee dissatisfaction, as 43.5 per cent of the participants considered the high degree of centralization as an obstacle to effective training. The high degree of centralization, which was asserted by participants, was confirmed by the investigated documents and through the researchers’ observations.

The one-way, top-down, decision-making style could be linked to the nature of communication. The communication style in the three companies was similar in that the managers took the lead in making all the training decisions. In this regard, 40 per cent of the privatized company’s participants stated that the training department was not able to determine its objectives as it was not informed about the company’s overall goals and objectives.

The centralization of management creates staff unwillingness to learn or develop. This assumption could explain the argument raised by 45.5 per cent of participants regarding employees’ lack of enthusiasm. This clarifies many phrases used by participants like ‘it is not the employee’s responsibility to think or innovate; their responsibility is to accomplish what they are out to do’. Overall, it is reasonable to assume that employees’ frustration could be linked to and derived from two main points: firstly, the sense that employees are not nominated to training programmes according to fair standards and/or based on real needs; secondly, bureaucratic procedures, deficiency of communication channels, centrality of decision-making and lack of flexibility have led to lack of conviction of the usefulness of training.

The impact of the electricity workers’ union on T&D

Although this point was highlighted by the senior managers and HR managers only, the indirect and unexpected relation that they perceived between the union’s influence and T&D needs to be addressed. They claimed that the workers’ union had stood against the proposed performance – salary system – several times. The union’s demands were centred on a standard salary increase for each functional category. They justified their demand as, firstly, to achieve a reasonable standard of living and secondly, to decrease the gap between the different functional groups. Each time the company bows to their demands under government pressure, as the power supply can not be allowed to be interrupted for any reason. Finally, employees reached a conviction that the salary increase is coming inevitably, without a need for immense effort. Eventually, they are not keen to create, innovate or even to develop.

A summary of the factors that shape T&D practice is shown in Figure 2.

The unattractiveness of investment in the electricity sector, which limits to a great extent the competition in this sector, was perceived as an inhibiter of T&D. These companies were not forced or challenged to change, which is shown in their lack of vision and the stated strategic goals. The absence of a work development requirement was replaced by fulfilling social obligations and securing social status. In other words,
absence of foreseen external threat allowed other considerations to interfere in training, particularly cultural values, as managers seem to be highly prone to nepotism.

The managerial style that characterizes Arab organizations, which is linked to and derived from national culture, along with the mentioned factors, resulted in employee frustration and therefore they were unwilling to learn and develop, based on their sense that they were not nominated to training programmes according to fair standards. Secondly, bureaucratic procedures, deficiency of communication channels, centrality of decision-making and lack of flexibility have led to a conviction that training is useless. On the other hand, employees’ lack of enthusiasm to learn was linked by senior managers to the union’s influence.

**Conclusions**

This study aimed to get a deep understanding of T&D as a philosophy and as a field of practice in the Jordanian electricity companies, and to uncover the factors that shape the situation. T&D was explored through three basic themes: concept, perceived role and practice. The study finds that the majority of participants conceived T&D to be ‘learning activities’, and T&D role was perceived to be ‘instrumental’.

The findings revealed that T&D was perceived through the traditional functionalist school of T&D. It is appropriate to acknowledge that this perspective is relatively consistent with the US managerialist approach. On the other hand, some of the functionalist perspectives were not cited. T&D was perceived through a narrow view of functionalism, emphasizing the role of T&D in certain reactive aspects. Consequently, it would be suitable to limit the illustrated perceptions under the ‘instrumental’ perspective of T&D.

Consistent with these perspectives, T&D activities were carried out in an unstructured manner, conducted as separated activities. The T&D traditional training cycle (TNA, designing, implementation and evaluation) was found to be truncated and

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**Figure 2: Factors shaping training and development (T&D) practice. TNA = training needs analysis.**
limited to identification of ‘individual’ training needs, mainly to meet particular or short-term needs of the companies, which indicates that T&D has a reactive role. This assumption, in turn, is highly compatible with the scope of the perceived explanations and definitions of T&D.

This study acknowledges what has been argued by other Arab researchers regarding the T&D function, as having a reactive role rather than a strategic or proactive role (see, e.g., Abdalla & Al-Homoud, 1995; Altarawneh, 2005). On the other hand, the study argues that the reactive position of T&D was not perceived to be a problem. T&D interventions are understood to follow naturally changes in technology, legislation and the environment.

Therefore, it appears that the way T&D is perceived shapes how T&D could be performed. On the other hand, the manner T&D is practised, the actual extent and purpose of T&D activities are reflected in the way T&D is conceived. Consequently, how T&D is managed influences the way in which employees were able to think about T&D. Thus, T&D shape for the Jordanian electricity sector was found to be that shown in Figure 3.

The mentioned tripartite view of T&D in the Jordanian electricity industry did not seem to come out of a vacuum. Among many factors and reasons participants provided to explain the situation, the most influential factors that have a fundamental impact on T&D philosophy and practice relate basically to (1) industry context, which includes level of competition, volume of investment and type of product or service provided; (2) internal context, which includes companies’ aspiration and strategic goals, decision-making style, communication channels, recognition of initiatives, performance system and job security.

This study argues that in large investment industries such as electricity, the competition is low, which affects the perceived necessity for pressing change. This was associated with the relatively bureaucratic and overcentralized management, preference for convention, high job security and absence of an individual performance-pay system; these factors restrict T&D to be perceived as ‘activities’, ‘instrumental’, ‘job related’ and conducted ‘as needed’ to fulfil ‘immediate necessities’.

Overall, this study argues that: firstly, the perceptions, understanding and application of T&D are shaped in the crucible of industry and organizational internal specification. Therefore, it could be said that these dimensions may have greater influence on T&D’s philosophy and practice than national or very external factors. Secondly, T&D has been presented through the prism of the perceived utility of T&D. However, this study acknowledges what has been argued regarding the role of T&D theory in guiding the related actions (see, e.g., Hull & Shunk, 1966; Stewart et al., 2010; Wang, 2008). At the same time, however, it emphasizes that the theory is formulated based on what is actually thought to be crucial; therefore, immediate needs inform both the theory and practice of T&D.

![Figure 3: Training and development (T&D) in the Jordanian electricity sector.](image-url)
References


Andrade, A. (2009), ‘Interpretive research aiming at theory building: adopting and adapting the case study design’, The Qualitative Report, 14, 1, 42–60.


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Appendix

Opening questions

This introductory part consisted of seven main questions, of which one was targeted to HR manager and T&D employees only, and are as follows:

1. What is your present title?
2. How many years of work experience do you have in total?
3. How many years of work experience do you have in the T&D field? (for T&D workers)
4. Do you have a separate unit/department in your company for T&D? If yes, what are its main responsibilities? If not, who is responsible for T&D?
5. How long has your T&D unit/department been established?
6. Does your company have a T&D centre? What are its main responsibilities?
7. How many employees are currently working in the T&D unit/department?

Part 1

This was intended to answer the first research question, How is T&D conceptualized by the organizations’ members? This part was concerned with exploring the employees’
understanding of the T&D concept. It aimed to understand how they conceptualized these terms individually and collectively. Therefore, it included questions regarding their definition of training, development, and T&D, and are as follows:

- How do you define the term training?
- How do you define the term development?
- How do you define the term training and development?

Part 2

This was intended to answer the second research question, How is T&D initiatives’ role perceived, explained and justified by organizations’ members? This part was concerned with exploring employees’ perceptions regarding the role T&D initiatives were supposed to play. Thus, it included open-ended questions to verify whether the participants believed in the importance of T&D. This section was also concerned with participants’ perceptions regarding T&D’s role in the company’s performance, success, goal achievement and the perceived need for T&D, and the questions are as follows:

- Do you believe in the importance of T&D? Why, why not?
- What do you think the T&D role should be?
- Do you think T&D functions and programmes are important for the company’s success? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- Do you think that T&D initiatives influence the company’s performance in any way? If yes, how? If no, why?
- How do you think that T&D efforts can help in meeting company’s current and future goals?
- When do you think the company should conduct T&D? Why?

Part 3

This part aimed to answer the third research question, How is T&D actually practised in the survey organizations? It consisted of four main categories. The first category included questions regarding T&D strategies, plans, criteria and priorities. This part also contained a section addressed to HR managers, because it included questions about the T&D budget, resources and the actual spending on T&D activities. The second category consisted of questions regarding the T&D process (TNA, designing, implementation and evaluation stages). The third category aimed to explore employees’ perceptions regarding T&D effectiveness. The last category sought to identify the type and range of T&D initiatives at the investigated companies, in order to clarify exactly what was covered by their efforts and what was not. The four categories are as follows.

A systematic approach to training and development involving strategies and plans

Strategic perspective

- Does the company have a T&D strategy? If not, why?
- If yes, who is responsible for formulating such a strategy?
- What are the criteria used to build T&D strategy?
- Are there T&D strategic objectives? What are they?
- Are there general objectives for the T&D unit? What are they?
- Does the company have clear T&D goals that are consistent with organization goals? If not, why?
- How does the company link T&D goals to its overall goals and objectives? If yes, how? If not, why?
- Does the company have a target level of performance? If no, why?
- How does the company determine the desired performance level?
Planning perspective

- Is there a T&D plan? Who is responsible for setting such a plan?
- How are T&D plan objectives formulated?
- What are the criteria used to build T&D plans?
- How does the company determine T&D priorities?
- How does the company link T&D plan goals to its overall goals and objectives?

For HR manager or training and development staff only

- Who is responsible for planning the T&D budget?
- What was the T&D budget for the last 3 years?
- Was the amount allocated for T&D enough? How? Why not?
- What per cent of your company budget does the T&D investment represent?
- How much did your company actually spend on T&D last year?

A training and development process involving TNA, design, implementation and evaluation

TNA stage

- Does the company conduct formal T&D need assessment at three levels (individual, job and company)?
- How does the company assess employees’ individual T&D needs? Can you describe its methods? Why this method(s)?
- How does the company assess job T&D needs? Can you describe its methods? Why this method(s)?
- How does the company assess its T&D needs? Can you describe its methods? Why this method(s)?
- How often does the company conduct T&D need assessment?
- Is there any responsible body (e.g. union) that receives employees’ complaints about unfair selection?

Design stage

- Does the company design its T&D programme?
- What criteria do they utilize to choose the best strategy of designing?
- What are the methods and techniques used? Why?
- How is the choice made between on-the-job and off-the-job training?

Implementation stage

- What are the steps taken to ensure proper implementation of the acquired skills and knowledge on the workplace?
- What are the top management, middle management and supervisors’ role in this stage?
- Are there any rewards of incentives? Why? On what basis?
- Do you think that there is a supportive culture for T&D?

Evaluation stage

- How does the company evaluate the effectiveness of T&D? Why this method(s)?
- Do you perceive the methods used as effective? Why? Why not?
- At which level does the company evaluate the effectiveness of its T&D programmes? For example, individuals, groups, job or company? Why?

Perceptions of the success and/or failure of training and development

- Do you think that the T&D function in the company is successful in achieving its objectives? If no, why? If yes, how efficient?
• Describe the barriers that face the T&D function?
• What are the strengths of the T&D function at your organization?

**Type and range of training and development**

• What range of T&D initiatives does the company conduct?
• What type of training and development programmes does the company conduct?
• For whom?