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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Jacky Hong is an Associate Professor of Management at the University of Macau, Macau. He received his PhD from Lancaster University. Since early 2000, he has been researching and publishing papers on the broader themes of organisational learning and knowledge management in the Asian context in journals such as *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *Management Learning*, *Journal of International Management* and *International Business Review*. He is on the editorial review board of *Journal of World Business*, *Management Learning*, *Critical Perspectives on International Business* and *Learning Organization* among others.

Sombat Kusumavalee is the Dean of Graduate School of Human Resource Department at National Institute of Development Administration. He received his PhD from Lancaster University. His main research interests include critical management studies, leadership and HRD in Asian contexts.

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## 1 Background

Embedded in a diverse socio-political landscape and fast changing economic environment, Asia serves as a fertile setting for challenging orthodoxy in the field of human resource development (HRD) through studies that investigate the influence of local contexts on organisational learning, innovation and change (Hong et al., 2017). On one hand, foreign firms pursuing technology and knowledge transfer to Asia must learn how to transform their HRD policies and practices in order to adapt to distinctive cultural and institutional environments (Rowley and Vo, 2010). On the other hand, we have also witnessed the emergence of multinational companies (MNCs) from Asia and their innovative strategies of harnessing human resources for overseas entry and expansion (Williamson et al., 2013). Although organisational learning remains an imperative for

developed country MNCs and emerging Asian MNCs alike, the human resources challenges encountered by these two types of MNC are different.

This special issue seeks to address two broad research issues in HRD. First, foreign MNCs adopting the model of one-way knowledge transfer often encounter difficulties or even resistance from local employees when sharing the best practices from the headquarters to their Asian subsidiaries (Chen et al., 2013). This may partly due to the universalistic assumption of HR practices (Edwards et al., 2016) and the negligence of local contexts (Kong et al., 2012), which have come under criticism (Brestos et al., 2018; Edwards and Kuruvilla, 2005). Second, the importance and contributions of local talent for MNCs has long been recognised in prior literature (Li and Scullion, 2010; Hartmann et al., 2010). However, our understanding about the challenges involved for foreign expatriates to develop local employees' learning capabilities in the culturally diverse environments is somehow limited (Belet, 2010).

## **2 Papers in this special issue**

Five articles were eventually accepted for publication. Each of them addresses a different facet of HRD-related issues and challenges pertinent to learning and innovation in five Asia countries, namely China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand and United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the first article, Bin, Antonio, Xiao and Trigo report a qualitative case study of a Chinese family firm based in Chengdu, China. Combining both primary (e.g., interview and observation) and secondary (e.g., documentation) data, they are able to conceive the governance model of a Chinese family business and postulate how it co-evolves with the members' capabilities. The findings thus deepen our understanding about the unique benefits of dual governance structures and related impact on the training and development of Chinese professional managers.

In the second article, Rajakaruna and Wijeratne focus on the humanitarian logistics (HL) field by examining the practitioners' management, interpersonal, supply chain coordination and crisis management skills on the prospects of their career development. Through a survey of HL practitioners in Sri Lanka, their study validates the values and contributions of HRD in the Asian context, thus re-affirming a strong and positive relationship between interpersonal and crisis management skills and organisational performance.

The third article by Saba, Ashfaq, and Ali provides a rare glimpse of the workplace deviant behaviours among the employees in Southeast Asian firms. Based on a survey conducted with employees in Pakistan, their study reveals the moderating effects of self-control and revenge attitude on the relationship between psychological contract breach and workplace deviant behaviours. Their work draws attention to the importance for enhancing employees' belief of self-control and reducing their revenge attitude as effective solutions for alleviating the undesirable consequences of the breach of psychological contract on workplace behaviours.

In the fourth article, Crawford offers a cultural-specific analysis of critical thinking competencies and its status of development in Thailand. Drawing on Hofstede's seminal study on national cultural value dimensions and Roger's diffusion of innovation model, he offers a nuanced analysis of the concept of practicality and its value for Thai cultural response to major crises and transformation in society. Educational policy makers, HRD

practitioners and researchers can benefit from the insights of this study in discovering the cultural resources in Thailand for enabling social and organisational change.

In the fifth article, Khan and Al-Shibami explore the learning preferences of Generation Z since the changing environment where they have grown up with has shaped every aspect of their lives. By conducting a survey among the trainees from both Generation Y and Generation Z in a vocational training institute located in UAE, the findings indicate that there is a strong preference among them for interactive e-learning rather than traditional learning approaches, thus calling for the need to update and redesign the HRD programs.

### 3 Conclusions

Despite the various country conditions and cultural contexts examined in this special issue, one common theme that has emerged from our collection of papers is the need to embrace a particularistic approach in developing local talents in Asia. Instead of blindly adopting universal models and practices (Edwards et al., 2016), HR practitioners in both foreign MNCs and domestic companies should be guided by a thorough analysis on local contexts in developing and implementing their HRD policies. There are some indigenous cultural values and practices in Asia that are valuable and relevant for addressing local contingencies.

As for HR researchers, it would be more meaningful to adopt a context-rich approach in their research agendas for unravelling idiosyncratic concepts and issues embedded in local environment. In so doing, they should be able to the self-belief and competency in ‘developing theoretical frameworks that address challenges faced by businesses in a researcher’s own community’ [Meyer, (2006), p.120].

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