Agility in the Age Of Amalgamation and the Role of HRD

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Roundtable: Human Resources Development

It appeared that the contemporary organizational environments undergo rapid amalgamations stemming from the necessity to alter business processes to realize maximum effectiveness and efficiency. It was also apparent that high-intensity rivalry in this dynamic global setting marked by uncertainty called for expeditious decision making that necessitates agility. While being expeditious within the context of this research meant the ability to combine velocity and effectiveness, agility applied to human condition reflected an individual's level of resilience to quickly embrace the speed and the implications of change for amalgamation and sustainability. It was hypothesized that resilience necessitated the presence and the active involvement of an intellectually curious adult learner based on (a) the need to know, (b) the learners' self-concept, (c) the role of learners' experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation toward learning, and (f) motivation (Knowles et al., 2015) to be committed to life-long learning also known as the andragogy learning and self-development to acclimate to rapidly changing and amalgamating environments. Agility appeared to be the framework of organizations that focused on not only developing and sustaining technical competencies through human resources development (HRD) based on training and knowledge transfer, but creative and critical reasoning empowered by compassion and collaboration. HRD in short was perceived as the training and development of a company's personnel. While HRD could be delivered in a formal fashion such as training and training transfer into the existing or evolving processes for retention and sustainability, fostering agility appeared to call for the informal aspects of HRD such as coaching and mentorship to create and sustain a workforce of enthusiastic adult learners. This research involved analyzing qualitative data from four participants—two males and two females—to examine how closely their perception of agility matched the working definition presented and what traits they attributed with agility. Further inquiry examined the application of agility as interpreted by the participants into the organizational environments as they interacted with other firms to amalgamate and to incorporate changing conditions while doing business and their views on the role of HRD in sustaining agile and amalgamating organizations.

Agility could be compared to the impact of boiling water, also known as the endothermic process on various objects in its environment. While a piece of raw vegetable entered the boiling water hard to become soft, an egg started interacting with boiling water as fragile to exit as hard. Ground coffee, on the other hand, transformed itself into a popular refreshment while permanently altering and amalgamating with its endothermic environment.

Literature Review

Wufka and Ralph (2015) proposed that the agility construct has been adopted into organizational environments, but its theoretical understanding is still evolving. While agility could be interpreted as the rapid reaction to a change, this process appears to require a certain level of mutability or nimbleness. Aghina et al. (2021) proposed that agility had increased in popularity and importance, contributing to the agile organizational transformation construct. Based on Knowles et al. (2015), agility appears to enhance the andragogical model of education to shape and sustain enthusiastic adult learners to support agile organizational transformations.

The Andragogical Model

Knowles et al. (2015) provided a working definition of an adult learner as a (a) biological person who could reproduce, (b) legal person who is able to participate in elections and/or obtain a marriage license without parental consent, (c) social person who is able to perform socially responsible roles such as an employee, and (d) psychological person able to arrive at and sustain self-concept. Wreczycki (2021) interpreted self-concept as the ability to draw self-worth from within to be patient to pursue a worthy cause. While perseverance was considered a virtue pointing at a strong self-concept, recklessness was considered as a shortcoming on the trait spectrum associated with a compromised self-concept (Wreczycki, 2021). Knowles et al.'s andragogical education model consists of several components as described in the following:

The Need to Know

Socially, adults were expected to take ownership of their need for knowledge. They also needed to know the reason for enhancing their knowledge and turning it into wisdom (Knowles et al., 2015). Tough (1979) posited that adults who decide to learn something new direct their intellectual focus and therefore brain energy into the expansion of subject matter while considering the benefits of enhancing their knowledge base. This, in turn, allows for the emergence of intellectually curious individuals characterized by love of learning. Wreczycki (2021) proposed that education to develop a person by providing instruction in formal and informal settings to create and enhance the body of

knowledge to be turned into wisdom is best applied in a social context but must originate at the individual level.

The Learner's Self-Concept

Wreczycki (2021) described self-concept as the ability to foresee the implications of decisions that result in social actions while assuming moral responsibility for them and their impact on the collective. Knowles et al. (2015) described individuals who maintained and sustained strong self-concept as self-directed. Wreczycki posited that strong self-concept individuals are inclined to ascend their free will to be in their highest selves, which in classical Greek meant individuals who were in the state of their highest instinct to know themselves from within rather than seeking self-validation from others. Such individuals would not have the will of others imposed on them (Knowles et al., 2015).

The Role of Learner's Experiences

Knowles et al. (2015) stated that adults enter any situation in their lives referencing a broader frame of experiences in comparison to children and adolescents. The qualitative characteristics of adults' experiences gives them broader perspective to rationally analyze new stimuli using their moral characters for decision making (Wreczycki, 2019). Issler (2012) referred to the moral character formation as "heart having a settled grounding" (p. 15).

Readiness to Learn

Needing to know was an effective motivator to start and sustain life-long learning. Readiness to learn occurred when adult learners continued to satisfy their need for knowledge to resolve the existing and evolving life situations. (Knowles et al., 2015). Wreczycki (2021) indicated that the trait of humility interpreted as "the state in which a person knows intellectually and experientially that they are not alone facing challenges to benefit the collective" (p. 75) is necessary to solicit support from others to pursue self-learning within the organizational context. Issler (2012) referred to this process as personal growth potential supported by the ability to assess the current state of the moral character and where it could be.

Orientation to Learning

Knowles et al. (2015) proposed that in contrast with children and adolescents, adult learners pursued subject-centered learning orientation. Therefore, learning was perceived as a tool to solve the existing and anticipated problems. New knowledge was incorporated into the existing repository of wisdom to better understand new experiences and to enhance skills to solve problems. Wreczycki (2021) emphasized the trait of integrity as "cohesion of thoughts, words, and actions" (p. 75) to guide subject-

centered learning with deductive and inductive logic as well as balanced emotions to act in social interest rather than self-interest. Issler (2012) referred to this phenomenon as closing "the willing-doing gap of the universal human problem" (p. 17).

Motivation

Adult learners respond to motivators such as job enhancement and compensation increases (Knowles et al., 2015). This is the monetary aspect of motivation associated with professional roles that adults play. Tough (1979) asserted that adult learners are motivated by nonmonetary factors as well as personal growth and development. However, personal growth and development depend on an individual's self-concept (Wreczycki, 2021).

Agility

Southwick and Charney (2018) referred to agility as resilience and the ability to restore to the (a) emotional, (b) psychological, (c) physical, and (d) spiritual baseline after facing a challenge. Gölgeci et al. (2020) researched agility further and identified resilient agility as (a) speedy, (b) robust, and (c) sustainable over extended periods of time. Aghina et al. (2021) proposed that agility allows organizations to surpass born-agile companies. From the biblical perspective, agility could be grounded in Proverbs 3:5–6 (English Standard Version): "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

Amalgamation

In sociology, amalgamation is the process through which one group of people combine with another while maximizing the confluence of traits to transform the composite of the two populations to their fused core (Steinberg, 2001). Wreczycki (2020) referred to amalgamation in the United States as the melting of "various immigrated cultures forming ethnic groups/enclaves and bringing with them various religious and philosophical traditions" (p. 123). From the biblical perspective, amalgamation could be grounded in Genesis 1:1–5:

> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face and the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light." And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Based on the pericope and the observation of nature, the phases of night and day flowing into or amalgamating with each other are commonly known as dusk and dawn.

Qualitative Research Questions

The literature review informed and guided the four research questions:

RQ1:   Within the context of agility applied to human condition as reflecting an individual's level of resilience to quickly embrace the speed and the implications of changes to act on them and to amalgamate them into the existing and/or evolving organizational processes, do you agree that attracting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners support agile organizational transformations for sustainability? If so, please elaborate. If not, why not (Schmidt Harvey & De Meuse, 2021)?

RQ2:   Given the working definition of agility applied to human condition as reflecting an individual's level of resilience to quickly embrace the speed and the implications of changes, do you consider yourself to be an agile individual? If so, based on what personality characteristics? If not, why not (Schmidt Harvey & De Meuse, 2021)?

RQ3:   Given the Knowles et al.'s (2015) andragogical model grounded in (a) the need to know, (b) the learners' self-concept, (c) the role of learners' experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation toward learning, and (f) motivation, do you perceive yourself as exhibiting all its components? If so, would you assign the same value to all of them or prioritize some versus the others? If not, why not?

RQ4:   Given the role of human resources development (HRD) as the training and development of a company's personnel that can be delivered in a formal fashion such as training and training transfer into the existing or evolving processes for retention and sustainability, do you agree that fostering agility appears to call for the informal aspects of HRD such as coaching and mentorship to create and sustain a workforce of enthusiastic adult-learners? If so, please explain. If not, why not (Knowles et al. 2015)?

Method

For the current study, Liamputtong and Ezzy's (2005) qualitative research method and analysis were used to collect and evaluate four participants'—two females and two males—narrative data as answers to four research questions informed and guided by literature review. In the tables, three columns were used to (a) present the narrative data in the left column, (b) allow for the emergence of themes in the middle column, and (c) translate themes into a single word code commensurable with a human trait to aid the emergence of characteristics potentially supporting agility and amalgamation.

Results

Interview Results

Four participants were asked the qualitative research questions. Two participants were females. Two participants were males.

Table 1: Study 1, Participant 1: A Male with a Biopharmaceutical Industry Background

Content	Themes	Codes
While I agree that attracting and retaining adult learners will support agile organizational transformations, I am going to say this. While I agree that an individual person's learning motivations will provide some agility/resilience, other motivations such as material aspects and social conformity will also play a role in the person's decision to be resilient. So, the real question here is whether agility is a decision.	Pointed at social conformity as a motivator to be resilient Asked if agility was a decision	Conformity Decision
To me there are two types of resilience, one that is used to overcome challenges and obstacles and the other that is used to collaborate and construct. For example, tennis that appears to be a zero-sum game requires resilience to overcome challenges and obstacles. And there is a non-zero-sum game that requires collaboration and cooperation necessary to achieve more complex goals. As a tennis player, I consider myself to be resilient while in the game meeting challenges and overcoming them. As a person who by virtue of mixed ethnicity is a member of two minority groups, I am confronted with and overcome challenges daily. As far as my personality traits that support agility, I	Isolated two types of agility: overcoming challenges and collaborating in teams to build and create Balanced personal resilience with collaboration and cooperation to function effectively in blended organizational environments	Overcoming Collaborating Agile Adaptive

Content	Themes	Codes
would say intelligence, cleverness, grit, and the ability to learn from my mistakes and persevere. I follow my father's wisdom: "Live and learn or you don't live long."	Identified characteristics that appear to support agility and amalgamation	
Although I find myself within the context of Knowles et al.'s (2015) model, I also think that we always need to survive challenges to feel safe. Once we overcome them, the higher need to learn can be present and acted upon. Putting yourself in the shoes of an HR recruiter, this person will meet various candidates. One candidate may have achieved great accomplishments via grit and overcoming adversity while the other may have achieved great accomplishments from the structured comfort of an academic environment. For example, you may encounter a company setting in which a group of professionals with the Doctor of Philosophy degrees may be placed in privileged settings while a group of engineers may be placed in more modest settings solving real problems while in the trenches of adverse conditions. In contrast, you will have a professor who achieves great accomplishments during comfort and convenience with thinking that is required for them to discover.	Agreed with all pillars of Knowles et al. (2015) but emphasized the need for safety as the basis human need from which more complex needs flow	Intelligence Cleverness Grit Perseverance Safety Motivation
The last question depends on a person and how and how fast they learn. While some individuals prefer on the		

Content	Themes	Codes
job training, others may opt for a less formal setting.		
	Expressed flexibility in HRD role in training and development and pointed at personal preferences such as formal and informal settings	Flexibility

The male participant representing the biopharmaceutical sector emphasized the importance of recruiting and retaining agile individuals exhibiting two facets of resilience to quickly overcome challenges and to collaborate in teams to build and create to support agile organizations that amalgamate changes into their existing structures while continuing to evolve. The participant considered himself to be agile based on being a mixed-race individual and an experienced tennis player. The participant pointed at (a) cleverness, (b) grit, (c) intelligence, (d) learning from mistakes, and (e) perseverance as his traits supporting agility. While the participant identified with all pillars of Knowles et al.'s (2015) adult learner model with equal value, he referred to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as important to satisfy the basic need for safety before psychological needs such as (a) love, (b) belonging, (c) esteem, and (d) self-actualization could be pursued with agility. The participant expressed flexibility in terms of the role of HRD in training and development of employees to be agile individuals and team members in agile and amalgamating organizations.

Table 2: *Study 2, Participant 2: A Male with a Transportation Industry Background*

Content	Themes	Codes
I absolutely believe that attracting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners supports agile organizational transformations for sustainability.	Identified traits that appear to support agility	Enthusiasm

Content	Themes	Codes
Businesses exist only as part of a larger system, and not isolated in a vacuum. This implies that the evolution of the overall system cannot but impact the organization, and therefore dealing with change is inevitable. Enthusiastic adult learners have an open mind and a flexible mindset, in that they recognize their knowledge not as a stagnant/constant thing, but as an evolving thing. This flexible mindset—the learner's mindset—is critical to the success of the organization with adapting to change and thriving.		Open mind Flexibility Adaptation
I do consider myself to be an agile individual, at least intellectually speaking. As with many of us, I have my challenges and I can be very bound to my routines and habits to mitigate the challenges, insulate myself against them, and/or control the number of variables in my day-to-day existence. Therefore, as my intellectual self evolves, additional and focused effort is required to apply the benefits of my intellectual evolution to my daily practices. I think that the distinction between intellectual agility and practical agility is an important one.		
Yes. In order, (a) I feel a need to know at some basic level at least. I can be very dismissive of things that I am not interested in, but my "need to know"—or curiosity—can drive me to immerse myself completely in new subjects or topics and my quest for knowledge in such situations can be quite intense! I am seldom "idly interested." My interests are either very intense, or negligible. (b) I have a strong self-concept and would say that generally my motivation is mostly intrinsic, and seldom motivated by external factors. (c) Thankfully, my "learner's experiences"	Identified as an agile individual yet bound to routines to mitigate challenges Emphasized intellectual growth and the application of its artefacts to daily routines	Agile Structured Intellectualism Growth

Content	Themes	Codes
have been ample due to a willingness on my part to place myself in environments that challenge me, challenge my beliefs, and cause me to continually validate or adjust my own thinking. (d) I would consider myself constantly ready to learn, and that is due to a flexible mindset (mentioned in my answer to question #1). (e) I have a strong orientation to learning—again, due to a flexible mindset by which I allow myself to constantly update and strengthen my knowledge with new experiences. (f) As mentioned before, I am mostly motivated by internal factors. Of course, some degree of external recognition is both good for the ego and the pocketbook, but it is not what truly motivates me.	Isolated intellectual and practical agility	Amalgamation
	Pointed at procrastination as a potential obstacle to sustain agility	Intellectualism
		Practicality
I believe that the human resources functions such as coaching and mentorship can contribute to a culture of learning in an organization. However, I do not believe that human resources departments or anyone else can imbue another with a true learner's focus. At best, coaching can take a measure of learner's focus and develop it more, but I believe that in the end the motivation to learn and the flexible mindset needed to be willing to constantly question, update, or renew one's learning is more of an internal personal process.	Emphasized two opposite ends of the need-to-know spectrum such as extremely interested and negligibly interested	Procrastination
		Intense
	Identified with strong self-concept	Negligible
	Assessed experiences as ample	
		Self-concept

Content	Themes	Codes
	Expressed readiness to learn supported by an open mind	Experienced
	Identified with strong orientation to learning supported by flexible mindset	Intellectual curiosity
	Classified self-motivation as propelled by internal factors	Learning
	Identified the role of HRD as coaching and mentoring but emphasized that a person must have will to develop	Motivated
		Self-development

The male participant representing the transportation sector believed that recruiting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners (Knowles et al., 2015) supports agile and amalgamating organizations for sustainability and allocated equal weight to the pillars of the model. The participant considered himself to be an agile individual pointing at two facets of agility such as intellectual and practical. The participant identified the

traits of (a) adaptation, (b) enthusiasm, (c) flexibility, and (d) open mind as supporting and sustaining agility. Although the participant agreed that HRD through couching and mentoring could contribute to individual development, he also emphasized the role of free will in self-development.

Table 3: *Study 3, Participant 3: A Female with a Service Industry Background*

Content	Themes	Codes
I agree that attracting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners support the organizational transformations for sustainability. The future generations are adapting quickly when it comes to changes in the organization. We are willing to make changes in our environment to benefit the future of new generations. We must make sure the change is relevant to the human conditions. To attract and retain enthusiastic workers both ends need to have enthusiasm and have a work–life balance. To grow as an individual, you need to recover quickly from difficulties in life and incorporate the changes into the organization. Able to receive instructive criticism and imply It to change. Anyone can change if they see their actions needing to be changed. Below are some of the skills you will need to attract and retain adult learner's support. • Lesson planning • Management • Communication • Conflict resolution • Knowledge • Critical thinking • Decision making • Gather feedback	Agreed that recruiting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners supported agile organizational transformations Emphasized the speed of adaptation to benefit the future of new generations Amplified the importance of change in synchronicity with the human condition Underlined the importance of individual growth supported by agility	Velocity Balance Growth Agility Humility Planning Management Communication
I do consider myself to be an agile individual and recover from difficulties quickly. Once I talk about a topic, I can move past it and forgive and move on. I adapt quickly to change; I am not scared to try new things or get a social and emotional lifestyle. For example, when I	Pointed at the ability to receive feedback to invest in self-development	Conflict resolution

Content	Themes	Codes
was a young girl, I would move every year to a new school and make new friends. Each year when I would move, I would have to quickly get over losing my friends and make new ones the following year. Sometimes change is for the best, and I have grown to like change and adapt to my unfamiliar environment or lifestyle.		Knowledge Critical thinking Decision making
When it comes to the need to know—it is important to know who we are from within. The role of learner's experiences, readiness to learn, orientation toward learning, and lastly motivation is equally important. I do perceive myself as exhibiting all the components. I am a little of each and all these options. I sometimes want to expand my knowledge and always want to learn. Secondly, I know who I am as a person within, and I would not trade who I am as a person. I am always willing to learn and am always ready to learn new knowledge and experiences in life. I see all the options as the same value they are all important in life as a human being.	Identified as an agile and adapting individual	Feedback Agile Adapting
I do agree that the adult learners that were in a mentorship or coaching learned the skills to work as a team and listen to your coach and follow directions. I also agree that fostering agility appears to call for informal HRD methods. The eight stages of human development are important for us to go through to grow and sustain a balanced life. To get employees to enhance their skills and sharpen their ability to adapt to their surroundings prepares them for adversity. Having a fast culture will prepare you to have the ability to move		

Content	Themes	Codes
quickly in your workforce and adapt to innovative technologies and work ethic.		
	Emphasized the importance of self-knowledge and placed the same weight on all pillars of Knowles et al.'s (2015) model	
		Self-knowledge
		Experience
		Learning readiness
		Learning orientation
		Self-motivation
	Confirmed the importance of formal HRD methods such and mentorship and coaching but pointed and the role of informal methods in self-development	

Content	Themes	Codes
		Formal
		Informal
		Self-development

The female participant representing the service economic sector agreed that recruiting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners supported agile and amalgamating organizations for sustainability. The participant emphasized velocity as important in agile transformations to benefit the future generations with respect to the human condition. The participant identified with the traits of (a) communication, (b) conflict resolution, (c) critical thinking, (d) decision making, (e) feedback, (f) knowledge, (g) management, and (h) planning as supporting and sustaining personal agility for amalgamation. The participant emphasized the importance of self-knowledge and placed the same weight on all pillars of Knowles et al.'s (2015) adult learner model. The participant confirmed the importance of formal HRD methods such as mentorship and coaching but pointed out the role of informal methods in self-development.

Table 4: *Study 4, Participant 4: A Female with an Educational Industry Background*

Content	Themes	Codes
I agree that the recruitment and retention of enthusiastic adult life-long learners is critical in an agile and amalgamating organization. The organization is its people not just as the sum of all traits, but their traits compounded.	Agreed that recruiting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners supported agile and amalgamating organizations	Resilient
		Flexible
		Moral
		Emotionally balanced

Content	Themes	Codes
		Emotionally independent
		Courage
		Perseverance
		Authenticity
I consider myself an agile individual who flexes to adapt within the boundaries of my moral character. Self-awareness and balanced emotions are necessary to maintain and sustain a personality based on temperament. Also, I believe that an individual must be emotionally independent to be able to remain themselves considering rapid and vast changes present and emerging in our global environment. Courage is necessary to bring our traits to the organizational setting. Courage to persevere with authenticity in doing so is critical just as much as service to others.	Identified with resilient agility and the ability to flex within the moral constraints	Service
I agree with Knowles et al.'s (2015) adult learners' model and believe that the cascading pillars are of equal		

Content	Themes	Codes
importance to sustain the role of an adult learner for a lifetime.		
HRD just like any aspect of human life is constantly evolving. As much as training on the job used to be a preferred method of developing individuals and teams, considering that globalization has dissolved boarders and boundaries and has contributed to cultural amalgamations across the continents, informal HRD including self-development to sustain the pillars of Knowles et al.'s (2015) adult education model is critically important.	Agreed with Knowles et al.'s (2015) adult learners' model and assigned equal value to all pillars	
	Cited globalization as reshaping the world, dissolving boarders and boundaries, and contributing to cultural amalgamation	Formal
		Informal
		Flexible

The female participant representing the educational sector agreed that recruiting and retaining enthusiastic adult learners supports agile and amalgamating organizations. The participant pointed at the importance of traits and their collective exponential impact on organizational agility and amalgamation. The participant identified with resilient agility, which is perceived to be robust and sustained over prolonged periods of time. The participant pointed at the role of moral character as the repository of values in staying emotionally balanced and independent to rely on the primary trait of courage to authentically pursue and persevere in self-development and be of service to others. The participant cited globalization as a factor reshaping the world while dissolving borders and boundaries and contributing to cultural amalgamation.

Limitations and Future Direction

The limitation of this study is its population composed of two females and two males representing the (a) biopharmaceutical, (b) transportation, (c) service, and (d) educational sectors. Since agility appeared to be the framework of organizations focusing on not only developing and sustaining technical competencies through HRD training and transfer but fostering creative and critical reasoning empowered by compassion and collaboration, group dynamics to (a) stay connected to effectively deal with changes, (b) motivated, and (c) develop new ways of working together are worth research consideration.

Conclusion

This research involved analyzing qualitative data from four participants—two males and two females—to study if their perception of agility matched its working definition grounded in Southwick and Charney (2018) and Proverbs 3:5–6. Further inquiry examined if the participants considered themselves to be agile and how they applied their agility within their organizational environments interacting with other firms to amalgamate and to incorporate changing conditions while doing business. Additionally, the participants were asked if they exhibited Knowles et al.'s (2015) andragogy model of education pillars consisting of (a) the need to know, (b) the learners' self-concept, (c) the role of learners' experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation toward learning, and (f) motivation and if they would prioritize any of them. Also, the participants were asked if they believed in a formal or informal method of HRD to promote agility and amalgamation.

About the Author

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