



## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Cross-Departmental Rotation Programs in Developing Well-Rounded Leaders

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This paper examines how cross-departmental rotation programs contribute to leadership development in contemporary employment organizations. Although widely implemented, the specific mechanism through which rotational experiences build leadership readiness remains insufficiently understood, creating a gap in HR research and limiting practitioners' ability to design evidence-based programs.

**Aims(s)** – The primary aim is to evaluate the developmental effectiveness of rotation programs in strengthening systems thinking, cross-functional collaboration, adaptability, and leadership identity formation. A secondary aim is to identify structural challenges that limit program impact and to outline HRD best practices for improving rotational design.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study is a conceptual and theoretical review synthesizing foundational HRD theories, including experiential learning, social learning, and experience-driven leadership development, with recent empirical research on rotational assignments. The review draws on peer-reviewed studies, leadership development frameworks, and HRD models to analyse how rotational experiences shape leadership competencies.

**Findings** – The analysis indicates that rotational assignments enhance systems thinking, strengthen cross-functional communication, increase adaptability, and support the formation of leadership identity. However, challenges such as role ambiguity, inconsistent managerial support, and misalignment with competency models can reduce developmental value.

**Limitations of the study** – As a conceptual review, the study does not include empirical data collection. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs, participant assessments, and comparative case studies to evaluate developmental outcomes across different rotational structures.

**Originality/value** – This paper integrates multiple HRD theories with contemporary research to provide a comprehensive framework explaining *why* and *how* rotation programs develop leaders. It offers actionable insights for HRD professionals, talent managers, and organizational leaders seeking to strengthen cross-functional leadership pipelines.

### KEY WORDS

Cross-Departmental Rotation Programs, Leadership Development, Systems, Thinking, Human Resource Development, Experiential Learning, Adaptive Leadership

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organizations operate within environments defined by accelerating change, heightened interdependence among business organizations, and increasing demands for strategic adaptability. These conditions place significant pressure on leaders to move beyond narrow functional expertise and develop a broader understanding of how organizational systems interact. As a result, cross-functional development has become a critical component of leadership preparation, specifically for employment roles that require coordination across diverse operational domains. Cross-departmental rotation programs represent one structured mechanism for designing and implementing this broader perspective.

By assigning employees to temporary roles in multiple functional areas, organizations aim to expand participants' operational knowledge, strengthen their capacity for cross-unit collaboration, and deepen

their understanding of organizational dynamics. Although these programs are widely implemented, the specific ways in which rotational experiences contribute to leadership readiness remain insufficiently understood. This lack of clarity limits human resource development (HRD) practitioners' ability to design evidence-based development strategies and to justify the investment required to sustain rotational initiatives.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of cross-departmental rotation programs as a leadership development intervention. The analysis focuses on how exposure to varied functional contexts designs leadership competencies, strategic thinking, and employer organizational awareness. Understanding these developmental outcomes is essential for human resource development professionals who are accountable for developing leadership strategies that align with long-term organizational needs. The importance of this research extends well beyond individual skill development. Well-structured and designed rotation programs can enhance organizational agility, strengthen succession planning, and reinforce a workforce culture that values continuous learning and cross-functional collaboration. By evaluating the impact of rotational experiences, this paper contributes to both leadership development scholarship and broader organizational strategy.

## **2 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN ORGANIZATIONS**

Leadership development has become a central priority for organizations confronting rising complexity and rapid employment change. These conditions demand leaders who hold not only technical competence but also the capacity to interpret organizational systems, integrate diverse perspectives, and operate effectively across departmental boundaries. As expectations for leadership broaden, development practices must adapt accordingly. The following section examines the changing nature of leadership requirements in modern organizations, the theoretical foundations that inform modern development approaches, and the critical role of Human Resource Development (HRD) in designing experimental pathways, such as rotational assignments, that support the cross-functional capabilities essential for effective leadership in the contemporary organizational environment.

### **2.1 CHANGING LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS**

Contemporary organizations operate in environments characterized by rapid technological change, heightened interdependence, and increasing strategic uncertainty. These environmental conditions have redesigned organizational expectations for leadership. While earlier models privileged technical proficiency and task-specific expertise, modern leadership roles demand extensive cognitive and relational capacities. Leaders are now expected to interpret complex organizational structures, integrate diverse streams of information, and anticipate the systemic consequences of their decisions. As Senge (1990) observes, "systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes," emphasizing the need for leaders who can discern patterns, interrelationships, and long-term implications rather than focusing solely on discrete operational issues.

This change reflects a broader evolution of leadership characteristics that is inherently cross-functional and strategically integrative. Day and Dragoni (2015) argue that contemporary leadership development increasingly centers on "the cultivation of broad, integrative capabilities that enable leaders to navigate complex organizational systems," supporting the growing premium placed on organizational awareness and adaptive sensemaking. As organizational structures become more fluid and interdependent, HR leaders must possess the skill to understand how decisions resonate across different departments, influence collective performance, and shape long-term employee strategic alignment. Consequently, cross-functional fluency and system-level insight have become essential competencies for effective leadership in modern organizational contexts.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The rationale for cross-departmental rotation programs is supported in several structural foundational theories that guide contemporary Human Resource Development. Experiential learning theory offers a

central explanation for why rotational assignments function as effective developmental methods. Kolb (1984) conceptualizes learning as a process in which individuals generate knowledge through the transformation of experience, moving through a cycle of concrete engagement, reflective observation, abstract interpretation, and active experimentation. Rotational placements naturally facilitate this progression by placing employees in unfamiliar operational settings that require them to draw on prior knowledge, interpret new challenges, and adjust their behaviour in response to emerging demands. With HRD, such structured experiential opportunities are viewed as essential for developing adaptive expertise and preparing employees for increasingly complex leadership responsibilities.

Social learning theory provides an additional theoretical foundation for understanding the developmental value of rotation programs. Bandura (1977) emphasizes that much human behaviour is acquired through observation and modelling, supporting the importance of social interaction in shaping professional identity and leadership practice. Rotational assignments expose emerging leaders to an extensive range of supervisors, peer groups, and organizational subcultures. This exposure enables individuals to observe diverse leadership styles, decision-making approaches, and behavioural norms, supporting the HRD objective of developing leadership identity formation through guided socialization and observational learning.

These theoretical perspectives closely support contemporary HRD academic research that supports the developmental significance of challenging, varied experiences. McCall (2010) notes that meaningful leadership growth is often driven by exposure to demanding, high-stakes assignments that require individuals to stretch beyond their established competencies. Cross-departmental rotations embody this learning principle by offering structured, high-impact experiences that extend organizational understanding, strengthen cross-functional capability, and accelerate leadership development. As a result, rotation programs have become a central HRD strategy for cultivating leadership channels capable of supporting the complex and interdependent environments that characterize modern organizational environments.

### 2.3 ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Human Resource Development (HRD) plays a central role in designing and sustaining leadership development systems that meet the demands of modern organizations. HRD professionals are responsible for creating structured learning pathways that integrate experiential opportunities, such as rotational assignments, into broader leadership capabilities. Recent human resource research further supports this strategic function. Garavan, McCarthy, and Morley (2016) describe HRD as a discipline focused on “building individual and organizational capability through planned learning and development initiatives,” emphasizing its responsibility for preparing leaders to operate effectively in complex, interdependent systems. Integrating rotation programs effectively requires deliberate alignment with organizational strategy. Garavan, McGuire, and Lee (2015) argue that leadership development systems must be “strategically aligned, systematically structured, and embedded within the organization’s talent management processes.” This perspective positions rotations not as isolated assignments but as coordinated components of long-term developmental architecture that supports succession planning and strategic workforce readiness.

Human Resource Development also ensures that learning from rotational experiences is further supported through structured reflection, coaching, and assessment. Contemporary research supports the concept that experience alone does not guarantee development; rather, growth occurs when individuals interpret and internalize their experiences. DeRue and Myers (2014) note that leadership learning is strengthened when participants engage in deliberate reflection and feedback processes that help them make meaning of their assignments. When implemented with strategic intent, rotation programs enhance both individual and organizational capability. They extend leaders’ cross-functional insight, strengthen collaboration across departments, and deepen understanding of organizational systems. At the organizational level, rotations contribute to agility, succession planning, and a culture of continuous learning, HR outcomes that align closely with HRD’s mission to build sustainable leadership capacity.

### 3 OVERVIEWS OF CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ROTATION PROGRAMS

Modern organizations increasingly rely on developmental practices that expose employees to multiple functional areas as a means of strengthening leadership readiness and organizational flexibility. As workplaces become more complex and interdependent, Human Resource Development (HRD) has placed greater emphasis on structured experiences that broaden the employees' operational knowledge and prepare them for roles requiring cross-functional coordination. Cross-departmental rotation programs have emerged as one of the most widely used practices for achieving these goals, offering employees intentional, temporary assignments across different units to deepen their understanding of organizational systems and enhance their leadership potential.

#### 3.1 DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Cross-departmental rotation programs are structured developmental assignments in which employees temporarily assume roles in different functional areas to extend their organizational understanding and strengthen their leadership potential. Unlike job shadowing, which is largely observational, rotational assignments require participants to assume responsibility for tasks and projects within the host department. Additionally, they differ from cross-training, which focuses on skill development within related functions, and from lateral transfers, which involve permanent reassignment. Rotation programs are intentionally temporary and developmental, designed to expose employees to varied operational contexts and prepare them for broader organizational responsibilities. Within HRD, these programs are regarded as strategic tools for cultivating leaders who can navigate complex, interdependent organizational systems. McCauley, Ruderman, and DeRue (2018) explain that cross-functional developmental experiences expand leaders' understanding of organizational interdependencies and enhance their ability to integrate diverse information, making such experiences critical for effective leadership in diverse employment environments.

#### 3.2 COMMON PROGRAM STRUCTURES

Rotation programs vary considerably in variation, reflecting differences in organizational strategy, talent development priorities, and the competencies targeted for growth. Short-term rotations, typically lasting several weeks to a few months, are frequently employed in early-career development pathways to provide rapid exposure to multiple functional areas and to cultivate foundational cross-functional awareness. In contrast, long-term rotations, which may extend from six months to a year, enable participants to assume deeper operational responsibilities, manage ongoing initiatives, and contribute to strategic projects within the host department.

Many organizations involve rotational assignments within high-potential leadership development programs, where emerging leaders progress through a sequenced set of cross-functional experiences designed to build strategic insight and broaden organizational perspective. Rotations are also commonly integrated into succession planning systems, allowing HRD professionals to assess leadership readiness, identify developmental gaps, and further prepare candidates for future leadership roles through targeted experiential learning. Recent research supports the strategic value of these structures. Young et al. (2023) observe that rotational programs function as "intentional developmental mechanisms that expose leaders to diverse organizational contexts," supporting their capacity to operate effectively across functional boundaries.

#### 3.3 CORE OBJECTIVES

The core objectives of cross-departmental rotation programs closely reflect HRD's broader aim of strengthening organizational capability through structured, experience-based learning. Previous research has supported the concept that assignments spanning multiple functions are specifically valuable for developing leaders who can operate within complex, interdependent systems. Allen and Fry (2023) argue that leader development is most effective when it intentionally cultivates cognitive, moral, and

relationship growth through exposure to diverse experiences and value-based challenges. The author's framework supports that developmental environments should broaden individuals' understanding of organizational systems while concurrently furthering their capacity for ethical judgment and reflective practices. In this sense, rotation programs function as a purposeful mechanism for expanding organizational awareness by allowing employees to engage directly with the interdependencies among departments, processes, and strategic priorities.

A central objective of rotation programs is to strengthen core leadership competencies, such as adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and systems thinking, by placing employees in unfamiliar contexts where they must engage with diverse stakeholders. Allen and Fry (2023) explain that leaders develop more holistically when they are required to integrate multiple perspectives, navigate ambiguity, and build relational trust.

Concurrently, rotation programs support succession readiness by providing the experiential structural foundation required for higher-level responsibilities and long-term career progression. This exposure to multiple functional areas further supports employees' understanding of organizational operations, enabling HRD professionals to assess leadership potential more accurately, identify developmental gaps, and strengthen talent management. In this sense, rotational assignments advance both individual growth and organizational continuity by preparing emerging leaders for the ethical, relational, and strategic demands of future leadership roles.

## **4 BENEFITS OF CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ROTATION PROGRAMS**

The cross-departmental rotation program provides a range of developmental and strategic advantages that closely align with the central aims of Human Resource Development. By facilitating structured exposure to multiple functional areas, these programs enhance leadership capacity, promote organizational adaptability, and contribute to more effective long-term talent management.

### **4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMS**

One of the most beneficial contributions of cross-departmental rotation programs to Human Resource Development is their role in developing systems thinking among employees. When individuals rotate through multiple functional areas, they gain direct exposure to how decisions, workflows, and performance outcomes are connected across the organization. This extensive vantage point allows employees to recognize the systemic interdependencies that influence organizational effectiveness, an essential competency for HR professionals responsible for aligning people, processes, and strategy.

As participants learn to anticipate how actions in one unit affect outcomes in another department, they develop a more holistic and strategic approach to problem-solving. Prior research supports this developmental benefit, as Tenday and Starr (2025) explain that systemic HRM requires leaders to understand complexity, anticipate cross-functional impacts, and make decisions that account for the organization as an integrated whole. Rotational assignments naturally support these capabilities by helping employees develop a holistic, strategic orientation that supports more effective collaboration and organizational agility.

### **4.2 ENHANCED COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Rotational assignments play an essential role in strengthening employees' collaboration and communication capabilities by placing them in teams that are directly characterized by diverse backgrounds, communication norms, and employment expectations. Operation across functional boundaries requires individuals to adjust their communication strategies, negotiate shared objectives, and develop trust with colleagues outside their primary employer departments. Through repeated exposure to these varied interpersonal demands, employees develop cross-functional networks that support information flow and reduce organizational voids within the workplace.

Such communication networks are specifically critical within HRD contexts, where leaders must coordinate initiatives across departments and mobilize extensive organizational support. As Febrianty and

Veri (2025) note in their study, cross-functional collaboration and professional networking are foundational to efficient HR program development, contributing directly to both individual capabilities, further developing, and overall organizational performance. In this context, rotational experiences support the collaborative competencies required for effective leadership in complex organizational environments.

### 4.3 INCREASED ADAPTABILITY AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Navigating unfamiliar environments is a defining feature of rotation programs, and this exposure significantly enhances employees' adaptability and problem-solving capabilities. As employees transition across functional departments, they must rapidly learn new processes, adjust to differing leadership styles, and respond to unexpected operational challenges. These experiences develop resilience, flexibility, and the capacity to perform effectively under conditions of uncertainty, such competencies that are central to HRD's mandate to prepare a future-ready workforce. Young-Babb et al. (2025) note that professional development experiences requiring employees to engage with novel tasks and dynamic contexts are essential for strengthening adaptability and equipping individuals to address emerging organizational challenges. Through repeated exposure to varied work environments, participants expand their repertoire of analytical and problem-solving strategies, ultimately contributing to a more agile and capable leadership environment.

Table 1 summarises the primary mechanisms through which rotation programs facilitate the development of adaptability and problem-solving, mapping these individual competencies to broader organisation outcomes.

Table 1: Impact of Rotation Programs on Employee Adaptability and Problem-Solving

Competency Domain	Rotation Program Mechanism	Individual Outcomes (HRD Focus)	Organizational Impact	Supporting Literature
1. Cognitive Adaptability	Transitioning across functional departments and adjusting to differing leadership styles.	Enhanced flexibility and capacity to perform effectively under conditions of uncertainty.	Preparation of a future-ready, agile workforce.	Current Analysis
2. Applied Problem-Solving	Rapid assimilation of new processes and engagement with novel tasks in dynamic contexts.	Expansion of the individual's repertoire of analytical and problem-solving strategies.	Development of a highly capable leadership environment.	Young-Babb et al. (2025)
3. Operational Resilience	Navigating unfamiliar environments and responding to unexpected operational challenges.	Increased resilience and ability to address emerging, non-routine challenges.	Strengthened organizational capacity to manage dynamic operational shifts.	Current Analysis; Young-Babb et al. (2025)

### 4.4 LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FORMATION

Rotational experiences contribute significantly to leadership identity formation by providing employees with opportunities to test their capabilities in new and challenging situations. When individuals assume responsibilities outside their familiar department, they're often prompted to reflect on their strengths, limitations, and preferred leadership approaches. This reflective process enhances self-awareness and builds confidence among employees, two qualities widely recognized as foundational to effective leadership.

As participants experiment with varied roles, interpersonal demands, and decision-making environments, they begin to construct a clearer sense of their leadership identity and potential career opportunities. These developmental patterns align with research by Afshari (2023), who notes that identity enactment emerges through meaning-making processes in which individuals interpret their experiences, align them with personal values, and integrate them into a coherent sense of self. Rotational assignments, therefore, serve as a structured mechanism for developing the identity work necessary for long-term leadership growth and organizational commitment.

## 5 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF ROTATION PROGRAMS

Although rotation programs offer substantial developmental benefits, they also present several challenges that HRD professionals must anticipate and manage. Ineffective program design, inconsistent support structures, and operational constraints can limit the developmental value of rotations and develop unintended burdens for both employees and their department managers. Understanding these limitations

is critical for ensuring that rotation programs are implemented strategically and in alignment with the overall talent development goals.

### **5.1 ROLE UNCERTAINTY AND ADJUSTMENT STRESS**

Although rotation programs offer substantial developmental benefits, they often introduce role uncertainty that can develop adjustment stress for rotational participants. Employees entering a new department may encounter unclear expectations, unfamiliar workflows, and inconsistent guidance, all of which may impede early performance and slow the learning process.

These transitional timeframes frequently lead to a temporary decline in work-productivity as individuals work to interpret new responsibilities and adapt to different leadership styles. Prior research has supported that uncertainty in developmental assignments can undermine both confidence and impede workforce learning when not properly implemented; as DeRue and Myers (2014) explain, individuals benefit most from challenging experiences when expectations and support structures are clearly defined by their managers.

From an HRD perspective, unmanaged uncertainty can diminish the developmental value of rotational assignments by overwhelming participants and limiting their ability to engage in thoughtful reflection. Effective onboarding, structured role clarification, and supportive coaching are therefore critical components of well-designed rotation programs. These practices help reduce adjustment-related stress, promote psychological safety, and ensure employees can fully engage in the learning opportunities that rotations are intended to provide.

### **5.2 INCONSISTENT MANAGERIAL SUPPORT**

Another persistent challenge in cross-departmental rotation programs is the inconsistency of managerial support across host departments. Since rotations place employees in units with different workloads, leadership styles, and developmental priorities, the quality of the experience can differ significantly. Some managers actively engage in coaching, provide meaningful developmental assignments, and integrate rotational employees into team processes.

Others may lack the time, resources, or employee commitment to support participants' efficiency, which results in uneven learning opportunities and a decline in the developmental value of the rotational assignments. From a human resource management perspective, this inconsistency poses a barrier to guaranteeing equitable developmental experiences across any employer.

Prior research on job rotation supports that managerial engagement is an essential factor to influence whether employees perceive rotations as motivating and developmentally meaningful. Helaudho et al. (2024) explain that job rotation is most effective when employees receive "adequate support and guidance from supervisors," noting that inconsistent managerial involvement can weaken both employee motivation and learning outcomes. For HRD professionals, this variation supports the need for clear expectations, manager training, and structured oversight to ensure that all host departments provide consistent developmental support. Without intentional alignment and accountability, rotation programs risk producing uneven participant outcomes and diminishing their strategic purpose.

### **5.3 MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN ROTATION DESIGN AND LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY MODELS**

A common challenge in implementing a rotation program is the misalignment between the structure of rotational assignments and the organization's established leadership competency models. When rotations are not intentionally designed and supported to build specific competencies outlined in HR or HRD frameworks, participants may complete assignments that are interesting or operationally helpful but do not contribute significantly to their leadership development. This disconnect represents a critical HRD risk, as it limits the program's ability to develop targeted capabilities such as strategic thinking, collaboration, or system awareness.

Song (2024) notes that HR systems must be "parallelly aligned with organizational systems" to produce meaningful developmental outcomes, supporting the need for rotation programs to be deliberately

mapped to competency-based leadership structures. Misalignment often occurs when the host departments prioritize immediate operational needs over the development objectives of the rotation program, resulting in employees being assigned routine work-related tasks that do little to challenge their individual capabilities or build the competencies required for future leadership roles.

When assignments lack developmental depth, rotational experiences become disconnected and fail to provide the strategic insight or cross-functional perspective on the program that is intended. This issue is compounded by the fact that developmental outcomes are heavily influenced by the quality of leadership within each host department; as Gallagher et al. (2023) note, unit-level human capital development reflects on how effectively leaders structure work experiences and support employee growth. Without this deliberate alignment between rotational tasks and the organization's leadership competency model, the developmental value of the program is significantly contracted, limiting employees' readiness for higher-level responsibilities.

## **6 HR BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE ROTATION PROGRAMS**

Developing effective rotation programs requires intentional design, structured support, and continuous evaluation to ensure that employees obtain meaningful developmental experiences that align with organizational talent needs. When carefully implemented, rotations can strengthen leadership structures, enhance cross-functional capability, and support long-term workforce readiness.

### **6.1 CLEAR DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES**

Effective rotation programs begin with clearly articulated developmental objectives that align with the organization's leadership competency models and long-term talent strategy. Establishing these objectives ensures that each rotational assignment is intentionally correlated to specific workforce competencies, such as strategic thinking, collaboration, systems awareness, or operational decision-making, that the organizations seek to cultivate in emerging industry leaders. Prior research on leadership development and succession planning further supports the importance of this practice; Thompson (2025) notes that leadership training and selection processes are most effective when they are explicitly connected to the competencies required for future organizational continuity. Communicating these expectations to participants is critical, as clarity regarding learning goals further supports motivation, focus, and accountability. When employees understand the purpose and intended outcomes of their rotations, they are better positioned to engage with new experiences, reflect on their growth, and translate those experiences into strengthened leadership capability.

### **6.2 STRUCTURED SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP**

Structured support systems are critical for maximizing the developmental value of rotation programs. Mentors, coaches, and supervisors play essential roles in helping rotation participants navigate unfamiliar environments, interpret new experiences, and manage adjustment-related stress. Research on mentoring with human resource development supports the importance of intentional support structures within the workplace environment. Patterson (2024) explains that effective mentoring relationships provide the guidance, feedback, and psychological safety required for learners to fully engage in developmental experiences. Regular check-ins, developmental conversations, and access to knowledgeable guidance ensure that employees receive consistent feedback and feel supported throughout their rotational assignments.

### **6.3 REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK**

Reflection is a centralized component of experiential learning, and rotation programs are most effective when they incorporate structured opportunities for participants to analyse and make meaning of their experiences. Human resource tools, such as reflective journals, guide debriefs, and coaching conversation help employees process new challenges, identify emerging workplace strengths, and connect day-to-day tasks to broader leadership competencies. Feedback from supervisors and mentors further supports this

learning cycle by clarifying expectations, supporting progress, and identifying areas for continued development.

Prior research on feedback processes within HR systems supports their developmental importance; Edwards et al. (2024) note that high-quality feedback enhances employee motivation, supports well-being, and helps interpret their experiences in ways that promote individualized growth. When reflection and feedback are implemented consistently within the workplace, participants are better able to recognize these patterns in their behaviours, evaluate their decision-making, and adjust their leadership approach over time. These HR strategies also encourage deeper self-awareness, which is critical for translating experiential assignments into sustained leadership capability.

## 6.4 EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Sustaining the effectiveness of rotation programs requires a systematic HR approach to both evaluation and continuous improvement. HRD professionals must consistently gather feedback from participants, supervisors, and mentors, while simultaneously analysing performance data to determine whether the program's developmental objectives are achieved. This evaluative process provides clear analytical insights into how well rotational assignments build target competencies and where the gaps may exist in either program design or implementation. Research on organizational feedback systems supports the importance of structured employee follow-up; Hubner and Zacher (2021) explain that systematic feedback collection and post-survey action processes are critical for translating employee input into meaningful organizational improvements.

These analytical insights generated through these assessments can inform adjustments to assignment design, support structures, employee competency alignment, and overall program strategy. A sustainable commitment to continuous improvement ensures that rotation programs remain responsive to organizational needs, talent development priorities, and evolving leadership expectations, which ultimately strengthen their long-term impact on workforce capability.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Cross-departmental rotation programs have become an important way for employers to prepare leaders who can work across functions and understand how different parts of the business are connected. When employees spend time in multiple departments, they often gain a clear understanding of decisions that are correlated across the organization, how teams depend on one another, and what it takes to coordinate work in complex environments. These experiences help build the kind of systems thinking, communication skills, and adaptability that modern leadership roles increasingly require.

Rotation also gives employees the chance to test their abilities in an unfamiliar setting, which can strengthen their confidence and contribute to the gradual formation of their leadership identity. While at the same time, the success of these programs depends on how intentionally they are designed and supported. Clear challenges such as unclear expectations, uneven managerial involvement, or assignments that do not match the organization's leadership competency model can limit the developmental value of the experience. These concerns further support the need for HRD professionals to set clear goals, prepare managers to support participants, and ensure that each rotation contributes to the overall leadership development strategy rather than function as an isolated assignment.

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