



HRD: the shapes and things to come

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Abstract

Purpose – To redefine contemporary HRD through a discussion of its conceptual development from “training and development” to a holistic “orchestra”.

Design/methodology/approach – HRD is often defined as being merely the training and development aspect of human resource management and this form of definition is commonly associated with “hard” forms of HRD which focus on the practical and strategic or “structured” elements of organisational functioning. However, it is change, and especially the rate at which change occurs, that largely influences the HRD hybrid that any organisation adopts. This paper systematically considers the professional discussions in a number of countries to trace HRD through four key phases: the “Duet”, the “Trio”, the “Quartet”, and concluding with the “Orchestra” and a holistic definition of HRD.

Findings – HRD is a combination of structured and unstructured learning and performance-based activities which develop individual and organisational competency, capability and capacity to cope with and successfully manage change. The future of HRD now lies squarely in the need for the profession to consider and embrace the inextricably interrelated paradigms of movement (where people have developed from); change (and especially the rate of change); dynamism (provided from leadership); harmony and unity (resulting from cohesive partnerships) – the “Orchestra”.

Originality/value – There has been limited critical review and development of Human Resource Development (HRD) theory in the past two decades. This paper presents a sequential discussion of the chronological development of HRD and concludes that contemporary HRD involves a holistic approach involving both hard and soft elements – an “Orchestra”.

Keywords Human resource management, Change management

Paper type Conceptual paper

Background

There has been limited critical review and development of Human Resource Development (HRD) theory in the past two decades. In particular, since the inception of the term HRD (attributed to Leonard Nadler in the early 1980s) there has been a dichotomous approach developed to HRD – on one side of the Atlantic the British have pursued a learning and development paradigm which focused on enhanced training and development genre’s (Garavan *et al.*, 1999). On the other side of the Atlantic, the Americans pursued a performance outcomes paradigm which focused on developing individuals to enhance organisational performance outcomes (Swanson and Holton, 2001). Much of the American approach emerged through organisational development theory and there has been an emphasis on coaching, mentoring and leadership development (DeSimone *et al.*, 2002). The dichotomous approach to HRD was further obscured by the evolution of Strategic HRM and Strategic HRD (Walton, 1999) and



attempts to clarify the space that HRD occupies in the overall conundrum of “what is HRM?” (Stewart and McGoldrick, 1996; Sofo, 1999).

It is our contention that it is change, and especially the rate at which change occurs, that largely influences the HRD hybrid that any organisation adopts. It is also our contention that “HRD is a combination of structured and unstructured learning and performance based activities which develop individual and organisational competency, capability and capacity to cope with and successfully manage change.” This paper will systematically consider the professional discussions in a number of countries to trace HRD through four key phases: the “Duet” (Figure 1), the “Trio” (Figure 2), the “Quartet” (Figure 3) and concluding with the “Orchestra” (Figure 4) – a notion that the future of HRD now lies squarely in the need for the profession to embrace fully the inextricably interrelated paradigms of movement, change, dynamism, harmony and unity.

The “Duet”

In the past, HRD was often polarized by authors as being focused primarily on either performance or learning. For example, whilst investigating an innovative scheme of tandem management to develop Czech managers by their German counterparts, Gutmann (1995) identified a joint learning process in what she termed the steps towards integration (see Figure 5). In tandem management, key positions are filled by an expatriate German manager *and* a local Czech manager for a limited period of time, usually three years. During this period, the German manager’s task is to develop the professional and managerial skills of their local partner and thus enable them to

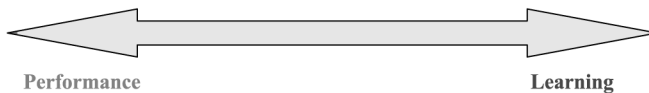


Figure 1.
The “Duet”

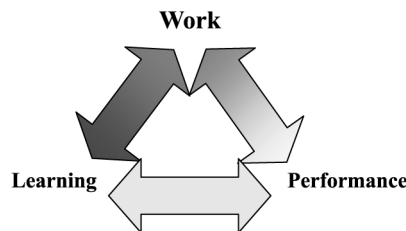


Figure 2.
The “Trio”

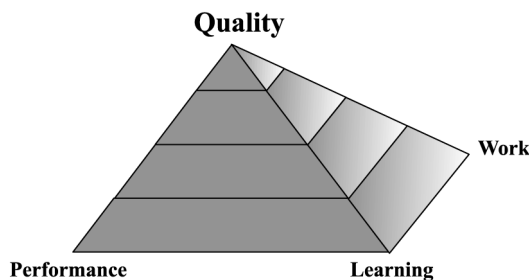


Figure 3.
The “Quartet”

Figure 4.
The "Orchestra"



- Involving those who are concerned
- Tandem management
- Project work in Czech-German teams
- Universal bilingual communication
- Extensive practical management training
- Temporary assignments in group companies for local managers
- Expatriates as know-how partners, responsible for the know-how transfer
- Czech managers responsible for the results



Joint learning process

Figure 5.

Source: Gutmann (1996)

manage their department independently. They act, therefore, as a coach and a knowledge mediator (Gutmann, 1995).

Outside of Europe, Yang (1994) analysed the relationship between production systems in the US and Japan and the corresponding HRM system and practices and asserted that HRM practices are functions of the prevailing production system. In the US case, for instance, the widespread scientific management principles, together with Taylorist production systems, tend to create a highly functional and job-oriented HRM system. Yang (1994) claims that a job-focused personnel system prevents US firms from achieving success in improving product quality at source. By comparison, the flexible production model in large Japanese plants tends to be highly integrated with team-based HRM principles. These flexible HRM systems, based on "kaizen" principles, contribute to the Japanese success in assuring product quality throughout the production process. Team-oriented HRM practices are a precondition for success of a process-based total quality management approach. Yang (1994) concludes by illustrating how Japanese-owned plants operating in the USA have integrated the process-based quality programmes with team-oriented HRM policies and practice.

Yang (1994) quotes one HR manager as saying:

We're looking for someone who can do that but somebody who also has potential. Somebody who learns well. If somebody comes in here and has some basic skills but they are constantly

learning, constantly growing and developing, they become more valuable. Once they learn our product they learn how to do other parts of our product without as much training. We don't want someone who comes in and operates just one machine and that's all they can do. We are not looking for that type of person. We are looking for someone who's got some flexibility because of the product we produce.

The actions of employees such as service personnel in UK are identified by Wilson (2001) as being important in communicating a company's corporate values and goals, particularly where they interact directly with customers. Their beliefs, norms and values influence their actions and the informal messages that they communicate. He highlights the complexity of organisational culture and the need for marketing professionals to be sensitive to this complexity in the development and implementation of corporate communication strategies. Wilson (2001) argues that this requires those in the marketing function to work more closely with researchers and practitioners in the fields of organisational behaviour and human resource management:

If an organisation's culture is to be influenced by senior management it is likely that in addition to corporate communications, significant changes may also be required in recruitment procedures, training, performance measurement and rewards. Although these areas may be seen as relating specifically to the activities of a human resource function rather than corporate communications, it is important that they are undertaken with the knowledge that they have an influence on the behaviour and values held by staff (Wilson (2001)).

Dodds and Verest (2002) provide a practical case illustration of the development and implementation of Web-based induction training in an international financial services company founded in The Netherlands. In the context of continuing growth and change, helping new employees to swiftly integrate into the company is seen as being critically important. They show how the power and capabilities of the company intranet are applied to support the induction process. The design of the induction training is examined from the perspective of the Lancaster learning model. He explains how the development of interactive training systems is helpful when presenting the induction training process to operational staff in order to clarify operational needs.

Dodds and Verest (2002) comment: "I recall that Reg Revans, in his Action Learning gospel, stated that 'the rate of learning should be equal to or greater than the rate of change in an organisation'". If technology is influencing and increasing the rate of change in organisations, then it may need to become an essential component of training and development, to ensure that the rate of learning keeps pace with change and that the organisations flourish and compete effectively.

Providing a further European perspective, Buyens *et al.* (2001) stress the learning-related aspects of HRD:

The new role of an HRD practitioner will be that of a strategic learning facilitator, performance consultant or even change agent ... The way in which management supports staff in learning could also become an issue in performance appraisals and management career planning.

Buyens *et al.* (2001) adopt the earlier approach of Sambrook and Stewart (2000) to depict the way in which the development towards a learning organisation has an impact on the relationship between work and learning. Whereas learning used to be synonymous with training, it has now become associated with learning from experience and self-directed learning. This is necessary in order to cope with changing

demands in the organisational environment. Similarly, learning is no longer regarded solely as a classroom activity. This changing view of learning has far-reaching consequences for line managers, who are expected to manage the workplace as a place fit for learning. In addition, this move has an impact upon employees who are now expected to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Finally, it greatly affects the role and tasks of HRD professionals, who are involved in planning and designing learning activities for the whole organisation.

Coulson-Thomas (2000) surveyed the corporate learning plans and priorities of 69 organisations in Belgium, Britain, Germany and Greece. He found that many courses were excessively general in nature, and that they failed to address specific requirements. He discovered that opportunities for collaboration were being missed. In many companies, training and development was seen as a cost, although they could provide the basis for generating new income streams, and become a significant profit centre in their own right.

Coulson-Thomas (2003) later asserted that successful and unsuccessful companies adopt very different ways of managing change. He considered that learning, training and development activities should address the root causes of unsuccessful methods and focus upon more profitable approaches. Coulson-Thomas (2003) claims that accomplishment in training and learning is directly related to the number of critical success factors that are put in place.

Garavan (2002) and his colleagues in Ireland identified a paradigm shift from formalised, intermittent and discontinuous learning to increasingly informal, experiential, asynchronous and real-time situated learning. They highlighted three contemporary themes in both the workplace learning and HRD literatures, namely: knowledge, expertise, competence and capability; organisational learning; and employability and career issues.

In relation to UK librarians, Simmonds (2003) emphasised that in her profession, as increasingly with most others, continuous professional development is seen as not merely attending courses and gaining qualifications. It centred instead upon the integration of learning and work, and learning from wider experiences, both on and off the job. Examining the nature of HRD in the same profession, but from an Australian perspective, Smith (2003, 2004a, b, c, d) discusses the importance of a strategic approach to HRD in an environment of rapid change and puts the view that HRD is a strategic imperative nationally, organisationally and individually. Smith outlines several models of organisational learning and emphasises its importance in achieving effective HRD outcomes. He argues that the HR aspects of organisational change affects the ways in which HRD can act as an effective organisational change tool. Smith outlines the six-step best-practice model of Noel and Dennehey (1991) for the application of HRD in achieving organisational change. That is: adopt a strategic focus; involve top management; target course content; develop effective learning methods; focus the HRD learning resource; and empower employees through HRD.

Smith (2004b) concludes by showing that the contribution of HRD to achieving effective organisational change falls into three broad areas:

- (1) creating an organisational environment that is supportive of learning and development;
- (2) developing and sustaining in employees an individual orientation towards learning and skill growth; and

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- (3) providing staff with the direct skills and knowledge required for working in the changed environment.

It can be seen that the dichotomous pairs of learning/performance and structured/unstructured are ineffective in their extreme forms but will work well together as a combination, the formula of this combination varying from organisation to organisation.

The “Trio”

The relationship between HRD and change was developed further, once the integral nature of work to both performance and learning was recognised.

As Clyde (2003) points out, recruiting new talent would not result in lasting and significant change, because not only were library schools producing relatively few graduates each year in proportion to the total numbers already in the profession, but many of those graduates were already working in libraries or had worked in them before they graduated (and in some cases, before they commenced their courses). She asserts that it is effective continuing professional development that is most likely to be an agent for change.

Garavan *et al.* (2002) found that work, learning and performance are inextricably linked:

- Workplace learning represents a set of processes which occur within specific organisational contexts and focus on acquiring and assimilating an integrated cluster of knowledge, skills, values and feelings that result in individuals and teams refocusing and fundamentally changing their behaviour.
- Workplace learning incorporates within its boundaries the issues of individual and organisational learning as both an academic discipline and as sets of practices that occur both formally and informally within organisations.
- The workplace learning discourse highlights the complex and context specific nature of learning. Distinctions are made between formal, informal and incidental learning.
- Formal learning activities are conceptualised as organisationally mediated and involve significantly less self direction when compared to informal and incidental activities which are considered to be highly self-directed and where control is generally within the sphere of individual learning.
- The notion of learning as a concept has evolved significantly in terms of meaning. In its traditional form, it tends to be conceptualised as concerned with the acquisition of skills or competencies that are enhanced through work experience. More contemporary conceptions tend to focus less on information or skill-based acquisitions and place greater focus on the development of new or novel cognitive processes in conjunction with skill acquisition.

Furthermore, Garavan and McGuire (2001) had earlier stated that Taylor’s espousal of the need to improve efficiency and increase production, together with his functional view of management, led ultimately to the development of the competency approach. This seeks to identify the ideal combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, so

enabling employees to become high performers with the potential to add value to the organization.

On the other hand, from this philosophical position of developmental humanism we can surmise that employees should be provided with a broad degree of self-control and self regulation on the basis that such committed employees will actively work towards fulfilling the aims of the organisation. However, some competency notions appear to advocate a more utilitarian instrumentalist philosophy that challenges this line of argument. The rational management of employees will lead to the ultimate aim of increased competitive advantage. This position is characterised by tight management control, close direction and prescription of required competencies as well as by promoting the concept of “best fit” between strategic objectives and competencies possessed by employees. Garavan and McGuire (2001) go further by emphasising:

A significant proportion of the literature considers competency to be an attribute-based concept and in particular defines it in terms of a specific set of attributes that employees utilise to perform work. There is a clear assumption that those who perform effectively are considered to have a superior set of competencies. There is a strong bias to consider notions of competency in a context free way. This tendency manifests itself in prescriptive comments about how possession of specific competencies can lead to high performance, irrespective of the organisational context within which they are utilised.

At the micro level, the integration of work, learning and performance is highlighted by King (2003) who illustrates the point by looking at the outcomes of secondment as a learning strategy. At the macro level, Tosey and Robinson (2002) offer a useful typology of change and organisational transformation (see Table I).

Significantly, they point to the importance of spiritual development as being central to both the process and product of workplace change at both the individual and organisational levels.

The “Quartet”

A significant addition to the exploration of learning at work came when authors tackled the apex of quality:

Large-scale programmes such as total quality management, business process re-engineering, six sigma, and others seem characterised by a need to be more competitive or more efficient; a focus on changing behaviour; and a highly programmed, usually expert-led, method leading towards transformation as a “product” (Tosey and Robinson, 2002).

An innovative “tandem training” approach between Volkswagen and Skoda, illustrated by Gutmann (1995), was embedded in an integrated management qualification programme. This importance of quality management to the whole scheme is illustrated in Figure 6.

	From programmes to process
From survival to fulfilment of potential	Corporate transformation Learning organisation	New business form Organisational transformation as spiritual development

Table I.

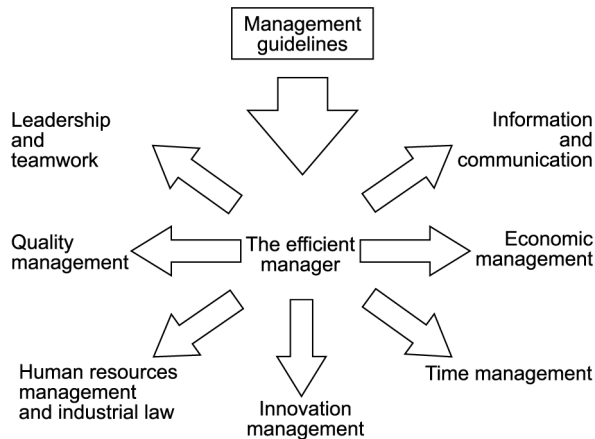


Figure 6.

Meanwhile in the UK, quality function deployment aims to represent the voice of the customer during design and production of products and services, while customer satisfaction surveys provide measures of conformity to performance standards in service delivery, which should be set by the customers themselves (Varey, 1995).

In Japan, Yang (1994) argues that the process-based total quality mechanism is inseparable from its team-based human resource management practices, whereas in the US the absence of modifying the highly specialised and job-focused employment system means it is difficult to carry out successfully a process-based quality control programme at the plant level.

Varey (1995) highlights a number of writers who have anticipated a convergence of HRM, organizational development, marketing and quality management in describing internal marketing in terms traditionally associated with the domain of the human resources specialist, including training, recruitment, motivation, and reward.

The “Orchestra”

The future of HRD now lies squarely in the need for the profession to embrace fully the inextricably interrelated paradigms of movement, change, dynamism, harmony, and unity. As the following analogy with an orchestra demonstrates, so too with learning:

As members of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (London, 2002) arrive for rehearsal, you would not think anything out of the ordinary. The usual numbers of musicians are gathering, and there is the usual banter as they take their places and start to tune up. It is only when the practice begins that you notice what is missing – there is no conductor. Instead, representatives from each section of the group are selected who collectively decide upon interpretation, phrasing, and all the other minute musical aspects that make a symphony more than just a bunch of notes on a manuscript. Every member contributes to ideas during rehearsals and any unresolved matters are put to the vote . . . While the rehearsal gets going, you may be wondering what has this got to do with management? Quite a lot, according to numerous corporations (including MBA classes) who regularly attend rehearsals and workshops in order to observe this process. Why? Self-managed teams are no longer a novelty, however successful self-managed teams are much harder to find. The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra seems to have overcome the obstacles normally associated with such an entity. It has won four Grammy awards and has been performing for over 30 years. What is

more, in a profession notorious for low morale and discontent, members appear to be happy – the average tenure is a staggering 20 years.

Robbins and Finley (1995) think the main problem is lack of vision rather than a clash of personalities. Senior managers have got where they are today through the very opposite means of team working and are not practiced in sharing their thoughts and aims. Finley (2002) believes that CEOs generally do not have the time for teams because they are not instantly good at them. Teaming is a skill that must be learned, yet few CEOs have the time (or the inclination) to do this. But senior management must know what being in a team really means, not just what it is like to promote the value of teamwork to other employees.

At times this can be achieved by following some basic principles, and in other circumstances an outside presence (such as a team facilitator) is required. Either way, the following guidelines could prove useful in encouraging an individual approach to teaming:

- *Learn how to respond.* Take ownership. Your choices are both the cause and the effect of a situation. Think of responsibility in terms of response-ability.
- *Remember your individuality.* You can make an enormous difference to a team. According to Avery (2002) the most common excuse for poor performance by highly skilled professionals is “I got put on a bad team”. His response is simple – “how did you know the team was bad before you got there?”
- *Do not be afraid to react.* If someone’s behaviour is frustrating you, do not keep it bottled up. It is possible to confront a colleague without inviting escalation or shaming the other party. Learn how to “call foul” at the earliest opportunity.
- *Judge all you like, just remember to let it go.* You may have heard the opposite in the past but in a corporate team environment you will just experience resentment or anger. It is almost impossible to avoid judgement of any kind, so do not resist it. However, you have to learn to let it go. A prolonged judgement runs the risk of becoming a grudge.
- *See each low as a learning opportunity.* This is easier said than done but trying to cover up a mistake will use up more time and energy than admitting to it, learning what you can from the error, and then moving on.
- *Have clear intentions.* Know your desired outcome. It may sound corny, but being able to visualize your success is key to success. As part of their training, many Olympic sprinters run a big race in their mind over and over. They imagine the feeling of crossing the line first and the emotions associated with receiving a gold medal. This is because, according to psychologists, we tend to manifest what is in our mind.
- *Contribute from the outset.* A common business maxim is “listen politely but do not share or commit”. This does not apply to a responsible team member. Do not hesitate in sharing your information, intentions or resources. It will encourage a feeling of openness and trust from the start.

Manning and Robertson (2002) describe the background behind the development of a new leadership self-assessment tool, the dynamic leader inventory, and how the authors were able to confirm much current thinking on visionary leadership. They

found leadership situations were enormously variable - what was appropriate behaviour in terms of visionary leadership varied from one situation to another, particularly with respect to the leader's influence over others, and their influence over change. This led to the development of a new model of leadership, the dynamic leader, which builds on, but goes beyond, the visionary model (see Figure 7). Manning and Robertson (2002) also suggest there are five facets of "visionary" leadership:

- (1) communicating a compelling vision;
- (2) kaleidoscope thinking, based upon being tuned into the wider environment, the source of the vision;
- (3) macro issues: networking, team-working and promoting a culture of excellence;
- (4) interpersonal issues: two-way communication, people orientation, participative style and high visibility; and
- (5) personal traits, including positive self-regard, persistence, perseverance and consistency.

On the other hand, Baran *et al.* (2002) stress the importance of a talented workforce due to the rapid changes in development in new technology. They state that in order to deal with change, organizations need to apply new management concepts and techniques. They examined differences in human resources practices and the effects of new practices on organizational change during 1995-1999 in ISO 9001-9002 accredited companies in Turkey and they found significant positive correlation is observed between the human resource practices and organizational change.

In the Dutch workplace, Dodds and Verest (2002) found the dynamic nature of Web-based learning is such that many people cannot satisfactorily visualise how the learning interactions will take place until they have the opportunity to experience a presentation of the process directly.

However, arguing from the perspective of working in Spain, Ma Valle (2002) feels that traditionally, organisational evolution has been forgotten and only recently has it been analysed by evolutionary theories: evolutionary economics and organisational ecology. According to evolutionary theories, the evolution of the firm is seen as a process of individual adaptation running parallel to the evolution of environment. However, population ecology suggested that organisations do not have the ability to adapt themselves, and that the process of organisational evolution is out of the organisational field. So, the adjustment to changed environmental conditions is

Influence over change	High	Driver	Transformer
	Low	Implementer	Facilitator
		Low	High
		Influence over others	

Figure 7.

achieved largely by the death of old organisations and the birth of new ones. Ma Valle (2002) proposes a model of organisational evolution combining two perspectives adaptation – evolutionary economics – and selection – population ecology. The adaptive ability lies in the ability, resources, and capabilities that managers build using organisational capabilities.

Meanwhile, in America, Noel and Dennehy (1991) contend that many companies are making significant strategic and organisational changes designed to make them more competitive in an increasingly global economy. They see this as an exciting time, in which HRD can make a significant contribution.

HRD has a partnership role with senior management in change. HRD professionals must work with top management, focusing on the organisation's strategic initiatives and to seek ways to leverage the development of employees to achieve these objectives in creative and impactful approaches.

Conclusion

This paper has systematically considered professional HRD discussions about a number of countries to trace HRD through four key phases: the “duet”, the “trio”, the “quartet” and finally, the “orchestra”. This has been underpinned by a contention that it is change, and especially the rate at which change occurs, that largely influences the HRD hybrid (that is, a “duet”, a “trio” or a “quartet”) that any organisation adopts.

It is apparent, after considering these discussions, that “HRD is a combination of structured and unstructured learning and performance based activities which develop individual and organisational competency, capability and capacity to cope with and successfully manage change” and the future of HRD now lies squarely in the need for the profession to consider and embrace the inextricably interrelated paradigms of movement (where people have developed from); change (and especially the rate of change); dynamism (provided from leadership); harmony and unity (resulting from cohesive partnerships) – the “orchestra”.

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