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CHAPTER

1

Human Resource Development

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Define Human Resource Development (HRD);
- Describe a model of organisational value bases influencing learning and change in work and employment;
- Connect HRD and organisational learning and change challenges;
- Identify and critically reflect on contemporary challenges in HRD.

Question 1.1

Adult Learning and Change: How Long Does It Take?
How long on average does it take an adult to learn a new habit, to change?

Introduction

Human Resource Development refers to the process of learning and change in work and employment. This process has the purpose of enabling skilled people to perform competently in their roles. Knowledge of this, from theories to methods and practices, has wellsprings in the study of human development and work organisation, and the professional development and practical management in work. The major goals of HRD in the work and employment context can be to enable and improve competitiveness, control, creativity and collaboration. The challenge of HRD is to shape and advance personal, group, organisational and national learning and change to achieve these goals. The nature of the challenge does vary with industry sectors and organisations, reflecting the particular performance, employment and strategic concerns that prevail in different industry sectors and organisations. These aspects of HRD are introduced to be considered in more depth in later chapters.
Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development is concerned with the process of learning and change in work and employment to enable skilled people to perform competently in their roles (Nadler and Nadler 1970, Swanson and Holton 2001, Reid et al. 2009, Stewart and Rigg 2011). That’s a formal way of operationalising and defining the subject. Well-trained and developed people are able to work safely, effectively and efficiently. For those who are passionate about it, and study it as they aim to work professionally in HRD, the meaning of HRD is often more than that; it is about realising the potential of people, teams, organisations and countries. HRD is a necessary and critical foundation of success at all these levels. And how success is to be achieved is integral to how people understand their lives, work and societies (Kuchinke 2010) not only producing effective and skilled employees. A recent OECD report on ‘Human Capital’ (see Perspective 1.1) concluded that HRD is central to achieving economic growth and skilled employment and much more. It is this broader valuing, meaning and purpose of HRD that inspires people to ask questions and seek answers about adult learning. As a field of study, a discipline, HRD is emerging as the home of the study of adult learning and change, and the theory and practice of success (see Practice 1.1).

HRD in the ‘big picture’ is to be understood as being concerned with training people for and in work and employment, with the theory and practice of adult

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<td>The OECD is a forum where the governments of 30 democracies work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The Human Capital report pulls together a lot of ideas and data about that, focusing on human development. Economic success crucially relies on human capital – the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes that allow people to contribute to their personal and social well-being, as well as that of their countries.</td>
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<td>Education is the key factor in forming human capital. People with better education tend to enjoy higher incomes, health levels, community involvement and employment prospects. Yet even in developed countries, as many as one-fifth of young people fail to finish secondary school, which severely limits their subsequent employment prospects. Learning beyond the years of formal education, continued training and education, will become ever more important as economies evolve and people work longer. To study HRD is to engage in debates on some of the key issues that affect our societies and economies today.</td>
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Practice 1.1: Recognition of HRD

The recognition and status of HRD in the workplace as a significant process, worth attention and investment, has been established over time. The original term ‘HRD’ has been used since 1970 (Nadler and Nadler 1970), though since then several important bodies and networks have evolved and shaped how we understand HRD. They include:

- Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD)
- University Forum for HRD (UFHRD)
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)
- International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO).

HRD Academic Journals

- *HRD International*
- *Advances in Developing Human Resources*
- *HRD Quarterly*
- *HRD Review.*

Learning at the core of HRD connecting areas of theory, concepts and contexts which inform and direct thinking on adult learning and change that go well beyond training for employment (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1** The scope of human development and HRD (Darker Circles)
The antecedents of producing capable and successful people, teams, organisations and countries are not confined to training for and in employment. These are part of the bigger picture where the organisation of learning and change to support human development is, in contemporary societies and cultures, associated with many contexts and outcomes (Seligman 2002, James 2007, 2008, Butler-Bowden 2008, Gladwell 2008, Ehrenreich 2009, Foley 2010). There is an interrelationship where human development for work both depends upon and contributes to human development in other contexts (see Perspective 1.2). In knowledge about HRD the foundations are understanding successful human development while the specific focus is the process of managing learning in work.

**Perspective 1.2: Do firms that make large investments in Human Capital perform the best?**

There are, in the simplest terms, two systemic views of Human Capital. There is the systemic view that a cycle of high skills, high wages, and long term success is initiated and sustained by investing in people, in human capital. There is the alternative view that a cycle of low skills, low costs underpins short term success. In this case employees are disposable costs, not assets to be invested in.

Subjectively the former view is appealing, but is it objectively true? Do, for example, firms that make large investments in employee development outperform the stock market. One study claims this is indeed the case (Bassi & McMurrer 2008). The evidence base is not robust, but the analysis of why this might be true is interesting; it is not just about the level of individuals’ skills, but about the positive reciprocal relationship between leadership and human capital investment. Investing in people challenges leaders and managers to be better; developing better leaders and managers results in an interest in upskilling other people too. The opposite is also seen; where the workforce is low skill there is little demand for improving leadership and management; and where leadership and management is limited there is not much motivation to upskill people, so this is a constraint on development.

A cluster of practices produce a virtuous cycle underpinning success;

- Learning Capacity (training)
- Leadership
- Employee Engagement
- Knowledge Accessibility (learning)
- Workforce Optimisation

Human Capital means more than upskilling individuals, it raises challenges for managerial and leadership capacity too.

Success: Individual and Organisational

The heart of HRD is about achieving successful human development for and in work. Capable, successful people, teams, organisations and countries are an outcome of many people working together with shared and contested definitions of success. The past and present results of working for success suggest there are both peaks and troughs that are encountered by individuals, organisations and societies in the extent to which human development as an ideal is actually attained. The peaks of the past and the present are represented by people, organisations and societies that flourish and achieve rewarding and fulfilling work and employment which contributes to potential being realised. The troughs in the past and the present are represented by people, organisations and societies that languish and decline, where potential is unrealised. If we better understood success, the probability of achieving and sustaining peaks and removing troughs would be increased. How we understand individual success has inspired many writers (Butler-Bowden 2008) and contemporary analyses (Gladwell 2008). In these, individual success is understood as emerging from a set of characteristics shared by successful people. These characteristics can be listed and commonly include the following:

- Optimism
- Having a definite aim and purpose
- Being willing to work
- Being disciplined
- Curiosity
- Risk taking
- Expecting the best
- Seeking mastery
- Well-rounded/balanced.

The iteration of such characteristics is hardly recent (Marlow 1984, De Bono 1985, Covey 1989), but their reiteration in evolving systems of personal development (Cottrell 2003, Sieger 2004) and reinforcement with the rise of positive psychology (Barrell and Ryback 2008, Dweck 2008) makes them a central and significant feature of the HRD landscape. Evidence for the validity of these factors as ‘the’ recipe for individual success, as the cause of individual success, is mixed. This perspective which has been implicit for some time has been made more explicit by the growth of Positive Psychology (Seligman 2002), which proposes that research and action should be about identifying and working with core strengths. Understanding these characteristics, and applying that knowledge to developing individuals, groups, organisations and societies, is a significant field of research and practice. While there are no large-scale meta-studies of individual success exploring these factors (Ng et al. 2005), they have a degree of face validity.
These individual factors do not operate in isolation. Gladwell (2008) identified a mix of culture, community and family factors that are shared by exceptionally successful people.

The same issue, understanding success and the lack of a clear profile of success, occurs as the picture is broadened, beyond individual success, looking at success for teams and organisations. Successful teams, and often sporting examples are first to come to mind here, are also perceived to share characteristics that researchers seek to turn into models and factors explaining group success (Belbin 1996). Combing these levels, from creating capable and successful individuals and teams to creating capable and successful organisations and countries, makes HRD an interdisciplinary field of study. This means that it draws on evidence, knowledge and research from a range of disciplines. These conventionally include economics, education, management, sociology and psychology (Swanson and Holton 2001). The advantage of HRD being an interdisciplinary field of study is that it leads to learners exploring diverse and potentially fascinating areas of knowledge and research. The disadvantage of HRD being an interdisciplinary field of study is that the breadth of diverse bodies of evidence, knowledge and research can mean learners skim the surface of disciplines and do not develop a robust and deep understanding of any of them.

Other writers critique aspects of the lists of common characteristics of individual, team and organisational success which are found in the popular literature. Both Foley and James critique such lists of characteristics of success as being part of the problem, not the solution. They argue that these are not neutral profiles of success, but they are expressions of values perpetuating perspectives on human development which may bias and distort our understanding of successful development. HRD influenced by these, and that can mean educational systems, workplace training priorities and cultures perpetuate, in the name of success, negative qualities; including greed and attention-seeking, and also a sense of entitlement, with overall an ideology of the ‘strenuous life’ as the way to succeed. This does not create success; it produces resentment and dissatisfaction for individuals, organisations and cultures. James argues that people, societies and cultures influenced by the search for success are driven to channel potential into performance in work and employment and attain affluence beyond the aspirations of previous generations; yet levels of mental distress, depression and dissatisfaction in those societies also have never been greater. Debate 1.1 invites you to consider if some value-based definitions of success may be part of the problem as they bias and distort how we perceive HRD. Developing skills for work and employment is the focus, yet an awareness of and reflective thinking about value bases is integral to that. HRD is a process that begins with the development of children in families, moves on to include learning in educational institutions and eventually entails training and development in employment.
Capable, successful people, teams, organisations and countries are an outcome of many people working together with shared and contested definitions of success. Theories of HRD provide explanations of what works to support learning and change that makes capable and successful people for work and employment.

Success is also an issue at a regional and national level; with different cities, regions and countries facing different challenges in producing the people and organisations that can create wealth and provide the services, work and employment, to their people. The contexts in which this can be studied, and the realities of human development most broadly as well as the work and employment concerns of different countries vary dramatically (see Perspective 1.3).

**Perspective 1.3: United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)**

One model for measuring levels of Human Development is the UN HDI. This uses data about three areas to produce an overall, single figure which places a country in one of four bands: Low, Medium, High and Very High. The data is about education in the form of net enrolments in primary, secondary and tertiary education; standard of living based on GDP per capita; and health based on longevity. The bands are:

- **Very High and High HDI** 0.8 to 1.000
- **Medium HDI** 0.500 to 0.800
- **Low HDI** < 0.500

High HDI countries tend to have high levels of enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education; high levels of GDP per capita; and populations with the greatest longevity.

High HDI nations are affluent, developed nations. The top 10 in the 2010 review were Norway, Australia, Ireland, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Switzerland and Japan. Medium HDI status nation are developing nations with critical challenges. The top 10 in 2010 in this category are Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Iran, Georgia, Dominican Republic, China, Belize, and Samoa.

Low HDI status nations are those facing multiple problems (the changing village). These in 2010 include Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Congo, Chad, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

Debate 1.1: Outliers or Peelers as the Challenge?

**Outliers** is a book that explores stories of individual and remarkable success (Gladwell 2008). The stories Gladwell recounts range from Canadian elite ice hockey players through to computer industry leaders and mathematicians, and pilots who successfully manage potentially fatal incidents, and musicians. One conclusion is that 10,000 hours are the amount of practice needed for remarkable success. But such hard work and natural talent also combine with ‘arbitrary’ factors (luck) and cultural legacies which for some nurture success but not others. All these together provide a tide of advantage, which leads an individual to remarkable success.

**Peelers**: Foley takes a different perspective, seeing increasing levels of absurdity to be found in modern life rooted in attitudes that are about a sense of entitlement to success without much effort. ‘It is a shocking and profoundly regrettable, but, apparently, sales of oranges are falling steadily because people can no longer be bothered to peel them. As soon as I read this I began buying oranges more frequently and eating them with greater pleasure. Now I peel an orange very slowly, deliberately, voluptuously, above all defiantly; as a riposte to an age that demands war without casualties, public services without taxes, rights without obligations, celebrity without achievement, sex without relationships, running shoes without running, coursework without work and sweet grapes without seeds’ (Foley 2010, p. 112).

Which view of the contemporary challenge of channelling potential into performance are you more sympathetic towards? If lucky breaks, arbitrary advantage and cultural legacies underpin patterns of remarkable success, how do we manage learning and change to enable more opportunities for more people in work and employment? Or if our ‘age’ is one in which people are increasingly ‘not bothered’ but have a rising sense of entitlement, how does that shape the challenges to be found in channelling potential into performance in work and employment?

HRD, Organisational Values and Success

What makes for a capable and successful person is a contested and complex area of study in itself. This contest and complexity is found again when organisational success is the focus. There are four types of work and organisational value that underpin success (Cameron et al. 2000) that shape HRD and learning in work and employment. To succeed can mean to

1. Compete: do things fast and change to do them faster
2. Control: do things right and change to do them better
(3) Create: do things first and change to break new ground

(4) Collaborate: do things together and change to have greater consensus and cooperation.

In some areas of work and employment individuals, groups and organisations create value by being fast; they have performance, management and strategic concerns which are about competing robustly, moving swiftly and being very customer focused. In other areas of work and employment individuals, groups and organisations create value by robustly ‘doing things right’, and have performance, management and strategic concerns around controlling processes, managing quality and moving steadily. In other areas individuals, groups and organisations create value by being first, being creative, and they have performance, management and strategic concerns about breakthrough learning, innovation and generating and protecting ideas and intellectual capital. Finally, in some areas of work and employment individuals, groups and organisations have performance, management and strategic concerns about collaboration, and are most focussed on building relations with many partners working together, strong teams cohering over time, developed over the long term and with building/sustaining what has been called ‘social capital’.

---

**Exercise 1.1: Learning and Change, Priorities and Focus**

Identify examples of people, groups and organisations which represent the four different performance priorities and focus:

**Compete:** do things fast, do them faster:

- person
- group
- organisation

**Control:** do things right, do them better:

- person
- group
- organisation

**Create:** do things first, break new ground:

- person
- group
- organisation
Collaborate: do things together, consensus and cooperation:

- person
- group
- organisation.

With these examples of different kinds of people, groups and organisations, you will have reference points. These are useful to keep in mind to understand that different kinds of learning and change challenges will be present for individuals, teams and organisations. What people need to know, be able to do, value and cope with, varies with these.

To an extent all these kinds of value and success are a concern in most industries and organisations. At some times or in some units in an organisation there will be a dominant concern in one value to a greater degree in some areas of work and employment. In the work and employment context what HRD means and involves and how it is managed will differ according to the value created and the kinds of learning and change which are dominant in that form of organisation. Learning and change in organisations where doing things fast is the core value will be quite a different strategic and management challenge to learning and change where consensus among partners and collaboration is the core value.

Dependence and reliance on some forms of value creation more than others is also a concern at the national level. This is evident between economically developed and developing countries and economies, and also within developed and developing countries and economies. As the global economy has seen supply chains re-configured the relative significance of, for example manufacturing and service activities, involving control and competition as drivers of learning and change can change dramatically to work and employment requiring learning and change driven by creativity and collaboration.

HRD in Practice

Value-based modelling shows the big picture within which HRD has evolved and features. The shared concerns in any work and employment are that success, potential being realised in performance, requires learning and change. Particular concerns with learning and change, with the development of people and organisations, are shaped by the extent to which competition, control, creation and collaboration, and working faster, working better, working differently and working together, require learning and change.

There is a breadth and depth to HRD that makes the practical aim of understanding and channelling potential into performance a topic of some
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