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A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: LEVERAGING HR AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER IN THE HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the evolution of Human Resources (HR) from its inception as the clerical, personnel administration utility of a company to its current developmental role as the strategic partner that helps to grow firms into dynamic, high-performance organizations through the invocation of the next stage of HR conceptual growth, Human Resource Development (HRD). Further, it covers the evolution of HRD with both a theoretical lens as well as a practitioner's viewpoint in mind. This paper will discuss this conceptual evolution as it has occurred over time, as well as how it mirrors the overall progression of the organizational paradigm from traditional to developmental. This paper will also address critical issues with respect to the current state of HRD, providing facts and details surrounding this topic in order to examine how HRD has affected and is affecting the current business environment. This paper will conclude with an examination regarding how HRD can be leveraged by the modern High Performance Organization (HPO) to meet the strategic challenges of the current competitive business landscape.

Keywords: human resource development, high-performance organization, developmental organization

INTRODUCTION

The Human Resources (HR) concept has undergone significant changes in how it is viewed as a capability in modern industry. The study of HR is fraught with disagreement regarding its origin as well as laden with discourse on the implications for contemporary management. Drucker (1954) created the term “human resources” in his seminal work *The Practice of Management* and focused on its use as a function in managing operations, managing managers, and directing people in their work. Academicians and practitioners alike herald the common mantra that people are the most irreplaceable asset of any organization inasmuch as human persons are responsible for the decision making that occurs at all levels of the organization, including “managing cash flow, making business transactions, communicating through all forms of media, and dealing with customers” (Haslinda, 2009, p. 181). The organization is a constitution of all the talent, time, energy, creativity, expertise, potential, and intelligence of its members. Developing a solid understanding of human resources can facilitate innovation and flexibility as the organization negotiates factors of the external environment such as government regulation, technology, economic transition, customer perceptions, news media, and supplier relationships.

For the majority of the 20th century, HR was principally a functional area within the organization, performing the necessary tasks to manage the human capital in order to maintain staffing levels and ensure the continuous operations of the firm. In the traditional, authority- and productivity- driven organizations of the recent past, this HR role served the somewhat singular purpose of sustaining the workforce in order to meet production goals of the firm.

As organizations have evolved from less production-driven to more employee-centric, the role of HR in modern organizations has shifted in terms of its utility and influence to the firm overall. As such, the purpose of HR has subsequently changed from the predominately functional role of human capital management to the more strategic role of developing and maintaining a dynamic, knowledgeable, and progressive career-oriented staff. This latter role can be operationalized, for the purposes of this discussion, as Human Resource Development (HRD). Nadler (1970) defined HRD as “a series of organized activities conducted within a specified time and designated to produce behavioral change” (p. 3), and Desimone, Werner, and Harris (2002) reflect the contemporary application of HRD as “a set of systemic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands” (p. 5).

No longer singularly concerned with production output as the chief operating metric, contemporary businesses have learned that the growth and development of the people which comprise their workforces is integral to success. Beginning with work reform and regulation starting in the 1970s, HR has become responsible for more important aspects of the growth of the organization, such as manager development and assistance with strategic planning (Jacoby, 2004). This is further evidenced in the evolution of HR management from a predecessor term, human relations. As stated by Kaufman (1993), “Whereas human relations had led managers to emphasize the improvement of interpersonal relations and social conditions in the plant through techniques such as sensitivity training, human resource management encouraged firms to focus on practices and techniques that promoted employee development, such as job enrichment and pay for knowledge” (p.121). This growth from that of managing personnel to managing the development of human capital is the essence of the evolution of HRD.

It is in this conceptualization of HRD that the strategic value of employee development is discovered. In their discussion of the High Performance Work System (HPWS), Zhang, Fan, and Zhu (2014) refined the idea of the HPWS as a set of practices which develop employees’ abilities, dedication, and efficiency in order to create a competitive advantage. This construct fits the definition of an effective application of HRD, in that the goal is to bring about a positive change in the organization’s workforce. In this way, through the HRD concept, employees are developed into *strategic assets* of the firm. Strategic assets, as defined by Amit and Schoemaker (1993), are “the set of difficult to trade and imitate, scarce appropriable, and specialized resources and capabilities that bestow a firm’s competitive advantage” (p. 36, as cited by Becker and Huselid, 1998, p. 58). This ties to the assertion of Po-Chien and Shyh-Jer (2011) which states that one of the major potential benefits of using HPWS is to maximize the competitive advantage of the firm at large. Considering this, the overall goal of the HRD can be defined as the need to develop employees into *strategic assets* of the organization which are leveraged to create a competitive advantage that results in the achievement of greater business success.

HRD, as conceptualized by Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley (2002), consists of four major areas: individual development, career development, performance management, and organizational development. Though some of these areas, namely individual development and performance management, have historically been associated with traditional HR processes, the inclusion of career and organizational development, and, most importantly, the integration of all of these areas into one overarching concept, is what makes HRD a unique and paradigm-shifting concept. A further investigation into how HRD has evolved, how it affects current issues in industry, and its strategic value to the contemporary organization is indeed warranted and necessary to fully understand the future of HR in the modern business environment.

The purpose of this paper is to present a literature review which describes the evolution of HR from its inception as the personnel administration utility of the company to its current HRD role as a partner that helps to develop employees as *strategic assets* and grow firms into dynamic, high-performance organizations. The discussion that follows will highlight the current literature which provides a description of how this evolution has occurred over time, as well as how it mirrors the overall progression of the organizational paradigm from traditional to developmental. Next, critical issues with respect to the current state of HRD will be addressed, further illuminating both the current facts and details as well as the future areas of interest surrounding this topic. This paper will then conclude with a summary examination of the literature regarding how HRD can be leveraged by the modern high-performance organization to meet the strategic challenges of the current competitive business landscape.

EVOLUTION OF HR TO HRD

The evolutionary timeline of the HR profession parallels that of the overall concept of the organization in some interesting and illuminating ways. To be an effective aspect of the firm as the definition of organizational success matured and expanded throughout the 20th century, HR was, almost by necessity, forced to evolve from a simple administrative role within the organization into an integral, thought-leading nexus of the company with significant strategic input and value. Therefore, in order to understand how HR has evolved, one must also understand how the concept of the organization has and continues to evolve in the 21st century.

Albeit the terms and modern understandings of HR are relatively recent additions to the literature, the foundations of HR (at least in the U.S.) have four distinct historical eras. Langbert and Friedman (2002) classified these eras as the pre-industrial period (1600-1780), the paternalist period (1780-1920), the bureaucratic period (1920-1970), and the high performance period (1970-present). Each of these time periods reflected management's response to the stakeholder demands of the day. The pre-industrial period was characterized by compulsory labor practices such as slavery, indentured servitude, and apprenticeships as well as the series of state and federal laws that restricted labor mobility. Compliance with organizational directives was a result of privilege, state enforcement, and physical restraint. The paternalist period stemmed from the industrial revolution and characterized labor as a factor of production. Modifications to HR practices reflected management's desire to increase overall production. In response to the viewpoint that labor was just another factor of production, workers demanded better conditions and more flexibility. This timeframe saw the advent of both employment-at-will and incentive compensation, as well as the abolition of compulsory practices such as

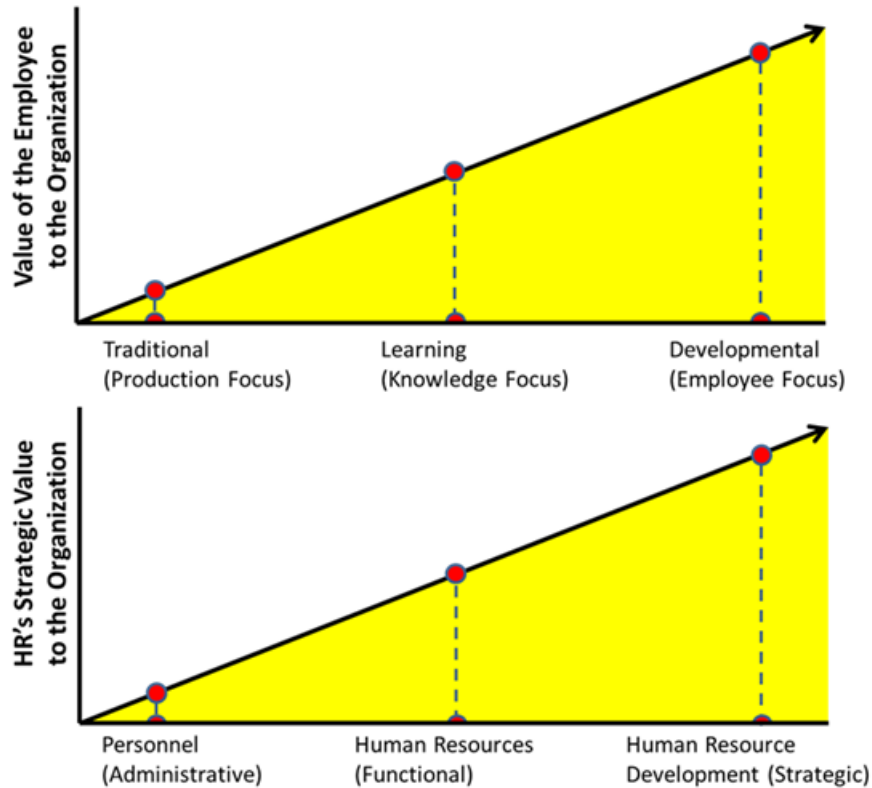
indentured servitude and slavery. The bureaucratic period saw marked improvements in management practice that addressed the human side of labor. Scientific management had a dual focus on process improvement and worker wellbeing. During this time, Human Resources Management (HRM) was referred to as personnel management and administrators of HRM services were called “welfare secretaries” (Ivancevich, 2007). Initiation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, OSHA, and FLSA reflected a growing trend in the era that emphasized workplace rights and safety. The field of human resources garnered increased attention by psychologists and academicians. The human relations movement provided the groundwork for workplace motivational theories such as the hierarchy of needs, equity theory, expectancy theory, ERG theory, and two-factor theory. Finally, the high performance period is characterized by a workplace environment where individual and group motivation, empowerment, customer focus, and organizational citizenship are valued. Hayton *et al* (2011) created four subsets of the high performance period by describing the themes in the academic literature. These include practice focused (1961-1971), theory development (1971-1982), strategic HRM (1983-1999), and globalization (2000-2010). While discussion of HRD took place in the 1970s, the application of it grew from the strategic HRM efforts of the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, HRD stemmed from training and education practices as well as management’s efforts to mobilize workers to the organization’s strategy. Scholars began delineating between HRM and HRD. While HRM was a process of finding and providing employees with the right resources, HRD had a strategic component that emphasized development of the individual. York (2005) suggests that HRD contributes to “both long-term strategic performance and more immediate performance improvement through . . . developing their [employees’] capacity for performance” (p. 20). The construct of HRD as modeled by Mankin (2001) and adapted by Werner (2014) illustrates HRD as a mechanism of learning, knowledge creation, change, and continuous development. HRD permeates the organization to initiate change and growth as a natural overlap of strategy and structure, culture, and HRM functions.

Gilley and Maycunich (2000) offer a unique perspective on the evolution of the modern organization. They contend that the organizational concept has grown considerably from its beginnings, which consisted principally of the traditional, hierarchy-based format of the historic business environment, defined by authority held at high levels, strict focus on production over people, and very little emphasis on employee development. This rigid design was improved upon with the creation of the learning organizational paradigm, which became popular in the latter half of the 20th century. Unlike the traditional organization, the learning organization is “dedicated to improving workers, their productivity, and overall business performance via continuous lifelong learning” (Gilley and Maycunich, 2000, p. 5). In essence, the learning organization shifts focus from the productivity of the workers to the learning of the workers themselves, improving worker knowledge and thereby bettering the organization. Gilley and Maycunich (2000) further espouse that the organization can reach even greater success by becoming a *developmental organization*, in which it applies resources to develop individual employees in every aspect of their careers, not just job knowledge. This, they claim, is the epitome of organizational development.

The key differentiator among these three conceptualizations of the organization is the manner in which individual employees are viewed and valued within the construct. It is in this valuation of the employee that HR has been able to assign and thereby assert strategic influence

within the organization, and hence evolved in-line and on pace with organizational theory. This congruency in growth and evolution is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Value of the Employee and HR in the Traditional, Learning and HRD Organization



Simply put, the role of HR- from the administrative aspect of the personnel department, to the functional HR mission, to the strategic partnership of the HRD concept- has evolved to mirror the manner in which the organization values and subsequently manages its employees through the organizational development process. In the production-focused traditional organization, employees are viewed merely as interchangeable cogs in the machine, requiring only clerical management but no further substantial support (Tran, 2015). In the learning organization, employees are now seen as resources that must learn new knowledge and perfect new skills to advance the firm; hence, they require a more functional-level management from a true HR department in order to nurture this growth and assimilate these skills into the broader organizational design. Finally, in the developmental organization, HRD is required to strategically integrate the full-scale career development of individual employees into the organization's overall strategic mission and plan.

In each stage of development of the firm, the role of HR is to provide the appropriate measure of human capital management and integration into the firm's strategic plan, which is proportional to the needs of the firm with respect to its employees and their individual utility and development within the organization. As each stage of evolution for the firm utilizes employees in different ways, so does the HR concept change and evolve within each construct. Invariably, the organizations with HR practices and architecture that best match their practical needs at a

particular stage of development will find the best synergy and cooperation among employees and management, with HR providing the key developmental interface between them.

Considering this evolutionary progression, HRD is the current pinnacle of HR practice for advanced organizations in the modern business environment. Assuming the merits and successful outcomes of the developmental organizational concept are desired by the firm, HRD is most appropriate and best-suited method by which the critical aspects of individual and career development of employees can occur. Through this practice, organizations can achieve the greatest level of growth for their people, and thereby the greatest level of organizational growth allowed by the Gilley and Maycunich (2000) developmental model.

CURRENT ISSUES IN HRD

HRD is a practice with significant strategic potential for businesses. As such, many issues within the HR environment currently exist which have influence on how it is best implemented, utilized, and received in the modern business world. The following discussion provides a review of the contemporary issues surrounding HRD and expounds upon several of these issues in order to elaborate on the topic and provided currency and relevancy for HRD to the operational setting.

Vince (2014) expresses an argument that HRD must be examined from a perspective which includes an understanding both *power relations*, which he defines as “the range of different forces or dynamics that are integral to people’s experiences and to organizing processes” (p. 410), and *emotions*, which he defines as “an emphasis on how development is shaped and avoided by ongoing relations” (p. 411). He supports the idea that individual development is a contributing factor to the growth of the organization; however, he cautions that, because of emotions and power relationships with individual employees, individual development can actually have an inverse effect on the organization and inhibit organizational change by creating conditions where compliance, rather than growth, will result.

For example, Vince (2014) comments that leaders in organizations are often charged with both maintaining consistency in operations while at the same time facilitating change. This type of inherent contradiction creates tension with respect to power relations and emotions within both the individual and the firm that is somewhat unavoidable, and, unfortunately, often ignored by HRD researchers. He states, therefore, that current HRD studies should address this type of tension rather than avoid it in order to more accurately represent the reality of HRD challenges in the research of the field.

Rao and Salunkhe (2013) provide a conjecture in which they support Gilley and Maycunich (2000) in their assertion that utilizing HRD to develop the firm is necessary and vital for positive growth and change. In their research, they assert that an optimal “Developmental Climate” (p. 39) is a critical part of making HRD a successful tool for managing the growth of employees in an organization. This climate consists of several tendencies of the organization, those being to treat people as the principal resources, to ensure supervisors develop subordinates, to believe in the capacity of employees to learn and grow, and to have open communications.

The issue, according to Rao and Salunkhe (2013) is that many organizations do not have the conditions necessary to foster the Developmental Climate they believe is needed to leverage HRD to affect organizational change. They claim too much time is devoted to evaluating material and technological needs, but very little concern is paid to the requirements for employee resources. They claim that this attitude of indifference to the labor force is attributable to an archaic view with respect to management, one very similar to the perspective of Gilley and Maycunich (2000) in regards to leadership in the traditional organization; simply put, managers are too focused on production and view employees as indiscriminate cogs with little to no intrinsic value.

The result of this inability to widen the concept of management to include more than a narrow view of human resources as replaceable components is a lack of trust between managers and employees (Rao and Salunkhe, 2013). HRD, when utilized effectively, can be a solution to this issue by fostering a Developmental Climate when employees are motivated to learn and grow. In this role, HRD managers are tasked with developing, monitoring, and evaluating training platforms designed to promote individual, and thereby organizational, growth through learning and knowledge acquisition throughout the employee's career lifecycle.

Another issue in the contemporary scope of HRD is that of work-life balance among employees. Kahnweiler (2008) operationalizes the concept of *work-life balance* as "achieving and maintaining a sense of balance between the demands of work and the commitments outside of it" (p. 75). He contends that there is very little research regarding HRD and its relationship with the work-life balance subject, mostly because the impression of work-life aligns more closely to HR management than to HRD, and, as these are distinct disciplines within the HR field of study, work-life is more of a concern of the former vice the latter.

Kahnweiler (2008) offers several reasons to refute this aforementioned claim, and demonstrates that understanding and relating the issues of the work-life balance concept to HRD is both appropriate and useful. Among them, he stipulates that work-life balance is an "organizational effectiveness issue" (p. 79), in that workers must have harmony in this aspect of their careers in order to progress effectively and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between what they need from the organization and what the organization requires from them in terms of growth and development. He goes on to state that, as an interdisciplinary profession, HRD is uniquely well-suited to engage the work-life challenge, which could provide HRD an opportunity to achieve relevancy both practically and academically.

This concern of relevancy for HRD as a discipline poses one of the more significant issues currently facing the profession. Jacobs (2011) addresses this challenge in article in which he describes the relationship between HRD and management overall. He contends that a knowledge of HRD can be leveraged to positively affect the outcome of many management decisions, and that, through an interdisciplinary approach, HRD can be utilized to provide recommendations on various actions that need to be taken in modern business environment.

Jacobs (2011) provides some examples and context of this type of recommendation and advisement by HRD to the management field. He states that, in the case of a transaction such as a merger or acquisition, financial information is often the principal data which ultimately drives

the decisions made by key leaders. However, Jacobs supports the notion that this type of decision must be made with other variables also considered, and that HRD, when properly utilized, is in a keenly advantageous position to assist leaders in understanding the human component of these types of transactions. Further, he purports that managing and evaluating training effectiveness and transfer of knowledge, as supported by Rao and Salunkhe (2013), is an area where HRD has compelling importance to the field of management. Overall, he concludes that HRD and management have an interdependency of sorts, at least at the level of understanding employee learning.

Generally, the literature surrounding the HRD concept with respect to the current issues in the field suggests that the discipline has much to offer the modern business enterprise. Many of the notions espoused by the authors of the preceding articles support Gilley and Maycunich (2000) in their claim that fostering the concept of the developmental organization requires employees to be treated as the most important resource in the firm. By focusing HRD efforts to facilitate employee development, career development, performance management, and organizational development to align to the definition of HRD suggested by Gilley et al (2002), employee value to the firm is indeed promoted, and the foundations of a developmental organization are established.

The current issues described in this section align to the definition of HRD in some very intriguing ways. The influence of power relations and emotion proposed by Vince (2014) relate directly to the notion of employee development as a precursor to organizational development overall. The concept of the Developmental Climate developed by Rao and Salunkhe (2013) also aligns to the development of the individual, but further speaks to the concept of performance management and career development through the advancement of worker skills and knowledge; the same can be said for the concept of HRD's effect on work-life balance discussed by Kahnweiler (2008), in that the balance of work and non-work priorities impacts all three of these areas. Jacobs (2011) presents notions as to how HRD influences management as a practice, which affects organizational development overall. As an overarching theme, the current issues presented here truly encompass the breadth of the definition of HRD and demonstrate that, as a discipline, HRD faces critical challenges that shape the subject as a field of academic study while simultaneously forcing the concept to the leading edge of the examination of the current business environment.

HRD AS STRATEGIC PARTNER IN THE HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION

To truly understand the significance and strategic importance of HRD to the modern business enterprise, one must understand first the concept of the High Performance Organization (hereafter abbreviated HPO), and further recognize why aspiring to become this type of organization should be the ultimate goal of any firm. The following definition of a HPO, as stated by Waal (2007), encompasses the research results and major tenants of the concept developed over the last two decades:

A High Performance Organization is an organization that achieves financial results that are better than those of its peer group over a longer period of time, by being able to adapt well to changes and react to these quickly, by managing for the long term, by setting up

an integrated and aligned management structure, by continuously improving its core capabilities, and by truly treating the employees as its main asset. (p. 4)

Several aspects of this definition indicate the key differentiators between ordinary organizations and HPOs. First, HPOs are dynamic, understanding variations in the environment and adapting to change quickly. Second, they are decidedly engaged in long-term planning and management, dedicating resources toward these ends as opposed to more short-term goals. Third, HPOs are integrated, aligning the architecture of the organization's many functions in efficient ways. Fourth, they focus on continually improving capability and performance. Finally, HPOs understand that, in order to accomplish these and other various challenges, they must view their employees as the firm's most valuable asset and resource.

It is in this last aspect of the HPO that this concept aligns to and supports the ideals of the developmental organization as defined by Gilley and Maycunich (2000). In both theories, employees are understood to be the conduit through which all of the transformations between lesser-evolved organizations and HPOs or developmental organizations will occur. Changing processes, infrastructure, and even strategy within an organization will proceed to some eventual limitation; people are needed who understand the vision of the firm and are committed to driving the changes necessary to reach HPO or developmental organization status.

This layer of similarities between HPOs and developmental organizations is quite broad, in that the importance of individual employees, their growth and development, and the long-term effect of their career and performance management are foundational to both concepts. Likewise, the significance of HRD to each concept is powerful, in that HRD as a discipline can be leveraged heavily to manage and promote the alignment of employee learning and development to organizational goals. However, it must be noted that developmental organizations and HPOs are fundamentally different ideas. Developmental organizations structure every aspect of the firm around the goal of developing employees to achieve greater successful results and thereby increase the value of the company overall. HPOs, while viewing the employee workforce as a key asset, structure their firms around the goal of superior performance in the business environment, and, through planning and strategic management, empower and utilize that workforce to achieve it. In this way, HPOs take the concept of the developmental organization one step beyond the development of people, and use that developmental atmosphere to achieve clearly defined, long-term organizational aims.

Considering this difference, HPOs can and must focus on developing their individual employees to create greater value in their organizations *and* achieve the outcomes necessary to classify them as truly high-performing. With this aspiration in mind, a HPO's best opportunity to cultivate a strategic advantage and become a genuinely high-performing firm is to leverage HRD effectively. Specifically, the HPO must apply the various aspects of the HRD discipline toward the goal of best-aligning the human resources of the organization in developmental ways to achieve organizational strategic objectives. The following discussion examines each aspect of HRD and discusses how the concept can be leveraged within them individually to create strategic value for a HPO.

1. Individual Development

Within HRD, individual development refers to the learning of new knowledge and skills to improve performance relevant to one's job (Gilley et. al, 2002). This type of development is classified as more short-term in its effect, and more focused on the work behaviors of a single worker as opposed to the collective or organization overall. Individual development can occur in a formal setting as well as during on-the-job learning and training activities (Gilley et al, 2002).

In a HPO, individual development from an HRD perspective is foundational to strategic organizational success. Training and development at the individual level is needed for an organization to be able to adapt to a changing business environment, which is a definitional requirement for a HPO. HRD professionals serve many roles within the firm, one of which being that of a "change agent" (Vosburgh, 2007, p.14). In this regard, HRD facilitates the transfer of individual knowledge and job-related learning to individuals in order to help them adapt to the changing operational landscape. This thereby supports the firm in developing into a HPO.

2. Career Development

Career development is a more long-term approach to the individual growth of employees of the organization. It focuses on exploring and analyzing employee interests and aptitudes to align and grow these skills for the mutual benefit of the individual and the firm. Further, it involves the HR structures of mentoring and resourcing job and position growth and expansion within the firm to achieve long-term individual employee sustainment and progression (Gilley et al, 2002).

Career development affects the HPO in several ways. This concept requires the strategic alignment of management and HRD structures to grow individual employees into positions to sustain focus on long-term objectives. Career development also influences the definition of the firm's core capabilities, as those whose career progression aligns to these capabilities will find greater opportunities for progression within the HPO. HRD plays a significant role in the career progression of employees of the HPO by establishing pathways for the long-term advancement of individuals within the firm and providing guidance and counsel as individual workers progress in their careers. These actions have direct influence on the success of the firm as a HPO and add strategic value to the firm's operational plan.

3. Performance Management

Performance management is a system of processes designed to enact short-term organizational efforts to improve the performance of the firm (Gilley et al, 2002). These processes examine, analyze, and track all of the information within the firm related to both individual and organizational performance: performance appraisal metrics, work environment data, and job knowledge inventories among many others. The goal of this analysis is to develop short-term solutions to performance issues and quickly enhance the effectiveness of the organization overall.

The role of HRD with respect to performance management in a HPO is to guide individuals and the firm overall to greater success through a focus on short-term results that align to the company's core capabilities. Performance management emphasizes smaller, more tactical changes in organizational activity to improve business outcomes. This type of tactical change is another function of the change manager within the HRD paradigm (Vosburgh, 2007). In this way, HRD can provide strategic value to the firm by ensuring that performance management initiatives support the core capabilities of the firm and will thereby lead to business success.

4. Organizational Development

This last aspect of HRD is where the concept of the HPO and the concept of developmental organization (Gilley and Maycunich, 2000) come full-circle and realign in terms of a holistic approach to managing employees to affect organizational change. The goal of organizational development in the HRD model is to design new, long-term solutions to problems and shortcomings within the firm (Gilley et al., 2002). These solutions affect the organization at the highest levels, which has a direct strategic impact on the firm's success.

HRD provides perhaps the greatest influence to the firm with regards to the process of true organizational change. With an understanding that employees are, in fact, the main asset of the firm, HRD as an inter-disciplinary enabler within the organization is uniquely qualified and positioned to guide employee development to enhance organizational performance and institute organizational change. HRD fills many roles within the firm, including change agent (as mentioned earlier), but also administrative and employee relations expert, as well as strategic partner (Vosburgh, 2007). Through the fulfillment of these many roles, HRD can affect the organization in every manner necessary to shape it into a truly high-performing organization: helping employees adapt to change for long-term success, improving employee knowledge for enhancement of core capabilities, and helping align management and performance objectives. This makes HRD perhaps the most influential discipline in the firm with respect to executing strategic change and performing organizational development.

The conceptualization of HRD as an aspect of affecting organizational change is part of the strategic value this idea brings to the high-performance workplace. Zhang, Fan, and Zhu (2014) defined these high-performance practices as a HPWS, dedicated to creating a competitive advantage for the firm. The HPWS is just one example of an application of HRD being utilized to develop a change in the organization's workforce and develop employees into *strategic assets* of the firm. These assets, which are unique and specialized to the organization (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993), help to achieve the firm's strategic goals, thereby maximizing the competitive advantage of the firm (Po-Chien and Shyh-Jer, 2011) and thereby leading to greater business success.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has illustrated the importance and influence of HRD in the modern business environment. HRD has evolved from the administrative and clerical beginnings of the HR functions of the past into a truly strategic partner that can have major implications to the performance and success of organizations in any industry. Current issues, such as work-life

balance and the Developmental Climate, continue to keep the HRD concept on the forward edge of the discussion with respect to effective organizational change, and only through its continued study will the span and reach of its influence be truly known.

HRD can be an enabler to any organization, but has the capacity to be of significant strategic value to those firms that aspire to achieve the performance level of a HPO. The HPO concept requires that employees be grown and developed as the primary assets of the firm; HRD concepts, when brought to bear on this challenge, can substantially assist the firm in developing its structures, protocols, and, most importantly, people to meet this requirement. The interdisciplinary aspect of HRD enables it to affect every level of the firm, thereby directly affecting the major tenants of the HPO in highly-considerable ways.

This discussion is limited to the size and scope of the concepts engaged for the purposes of this examination. Further research into real HPOs which leverage HRD capacities, utilizing any type of quantitative or qualitative methods, will clearly bring greater clarity to this topic. This discussion has outlined where HRD has come from in its evolution, where it is now with respect to current issues, and where it could go in terms of its importance to the HPO concept. Where it *will* go, however, remains a question, and further research into this topic will be needed in order to answer it.

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