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WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCES CURRICULUM?

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What constitutes an effective university curriculum in human resources management? In an effort to answer this question, the authors reviewed the research literature on human resources curricula, comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing the recommendations that have been offered in recent studies. Although a number of scholars have addressed this issue from a variety of perspectives and offer many noteworthy points for consideration, the review of the research literature indicates that a definitive answer to the question of curriculum content has not yet been found. The authors summarize the recent research, categorizing studies in terms of type of research (empirical versus conceptual), nature of subjects in empirical studies (executives, HR practitioners, recent graduates of HR programs), graduate versus undergraduate program focus, and focus of the course of study (professional versus educational) in order to identify the current state of knowledge and fruitful avenues for future research. They provide a useful source of information for those charged with creating and maintaining quality human resources education programs, and for those who intend to research the topic further.

Introduction

Designing effective university business curricula is a daunting task. They need to be appropriately broad in scope to stretch the minds of students and exceed the level of vocational training. At the same time, they must provide students with skills and competencies that will allow them to succeed in a career that reflects the program's area of emphasis. Add to this balancing act the rapid rate of change in today's business world, and one faces quite a challenge to create an effective program.

Two additional difficulties are present in designing an effective human resource management (HR) curriculum for a college of business. First, as a field, HR originated and developed not as a business discipline but as a combination of psychology, sociology, and labor economics (Mahoney & Deckop, 1986). Even today, many university HR programs are housed in colleges other than business. Second, the value of the traditional HR role in organizations is currently in question (Sincoff & Hall, 2004). Business executives, scholars, and HR professionals agree that the HR role needs to change, but agreement as to the nature of that change is hard to find.

Typically, those in charge of academic program redesign turn to the research literature for guidance. Currently, the literature does not provide a consistent set of guidelines for development of an effective university program in HR (Sincoff & Owen, 2004a). Instead, there is a bewildering variety of perspectives in both conceptual and empirical work. This article organizes what we found in the research literature with two goals in mind. First, those charged with creating or modifying an HR curriculum can use the review as a starting point

in program design. Second, those interested in extending the current state of knowledge can use this review as a starting point for developing future research in this area.

Our Focus

To emphasize recent perspectives, we focused on the literature published since 1990. Additionally, that was the year Schuler pointed out that in response to business environment changes, human resources departments have an opportunity to move beyond their traditional support roles and become vital, business-oriented members of the management team (Schuler, 1990). Schuler argued that to be seen as credible by line managers, HR personnel need to "... reorient themselves and see HR issues as business issues and help line managers solve them" (p. 59). Schuler further identified six new roles necessary for the reorientation of the HR functions in organizations: (1) business person; (2) shaper of change; (3) consultant to the organization/partner to line; (4) strategy formulator and implementor; (5) talent manager; and, (6) asset manager and cost controller.

The issues Schuler raised have implications for the design and content of effective HR educational programs. For this review, we included articles that could be most directly useful in curriculum design: articles that addressed the changes occurring in the HR field and the corresponding required competencies needed by HR practitioners, and articles that specifically addressed HR curriculum content. For easier understanding, we then grouped the literature into four categories reflecting the primary emphasis for each article: conceptual pieces on the HR profession, empirical pieces on the HR profession, conceptual pieces

on HR education, and empirical pieces on HR education. Table 1 identifies the articles included in each category, and table 2 presents a summary of key issues addressed in each category.

Table 1: Recent Literature on Changes in HR Profession

Type of Article	Focus on HR profession	Focus on HR Education
Conceptual	Alvares (1997)	Adler & Lawler, 1999
	Alvares (1997)	Baill (1999)
	Anderson (1997)	Barber (1999)
	Athey & Orth (1999)	Brockbank <i>et al.</i> (1999)
	Bates (2003)	Dyer (1999)
	Beatty & Schneier (1997)	Heneman (1999)
	Becker <i>et al.</i> (1997)	Hunter (1999)
	Beer (1997)	Kaufmann (1994, 1996, 1999)
	Bowen & Siehl (1997)	Wiley (1992)
	Brockbank (1997)	
	Burke (1997)	
	Christensen (1997)	
	Ehrlich (1997)	
	Ellig (1997)	
	HR Focus (2002)	
	Kerr & Von Glinow (1997)	
	Kochan (1997)	
	Losey (1997; 1999)	
	Mohrman & Lawler (1997)	
	Rucci (1997)	
	Sincoff & Hall (2004)	
	Stewart (1996)	
	Ulrich (1997, 1998)	
Empirical	Giannantonio & Hurley (2002)	Hansen <i>et al.</i> (1996)
	Greer <i>et al.</i> (1999)	Hansen (2002)
	Hays & Kearney (2001)	Johnson & King (2002)
	IBM/Towers-Perrin (1991)	Langbert (2000)
	Rynes <i>et al.</i> (2002)	Sincoff & Owen (2004b)
	Schoonover (1998)	Van Eynde & Tucker (1997)
	Weinberg (2002)	Way (2002)

The articles included in each category, and table 2 presents a summary of key issues addressed in each category.

Table 2: Key Issues Addressed in Literature on Changes in HR Management

Type of Article	Focus on HR Profession	Focus on HR Education
Conceptual	Forces for change in HR	Core skills needed by HR practitioners
	Need to move away from traditional administrative/employee advocate/control roles	Appropriate types of training (e.g., university/on-the-job/professional association)
Empirical	Need for hard business skills	Types of university programs (MBA/MLHR/Executive)
	Need to keep HR fundamentals and add other capabilities	
	Need to align HR activities with each other and with strategic goals of organization	
	Outsourcing HR functions	
	Redesigning HR function or perspective	
	Identification of necessary knowledge and skills	Entry-level proficiencies need
	Areas in which knowledge is lacking Outsourcing	Curriculum evaluation of existing programs

Conceptual Pieces on the HR Profession

The majority of the articles that focus on the current and future changes in the field of HR are conceptual. Although their respective authors present a wide variety of perspectives, predictions, and recommendations, our review reveals several common themes that echo and expand issues raised by Schuler (1990).

As a discipline, HR is highly susceptible to external pressures causing change; curricula must not only keep pace with the change, but also anticipate and lead it. Among the change-inducing factors that are pressuring

HR to transform itself as a business function are competition (Beer, 1997; Ehrlich, 1997); the need to align HR strategy with overall company strategy (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Ulrich 1998, 1997; Athey & Orth, 1999; Alvares, 1997; Anderson, 1997; Beatty & Schneier, 1997; Beer, 1997; Christensen, 1997; Erlich, 1997; Morhman & Lawler, 1997;); customer focus (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Ulrich, 1998; Alvares, 1997; Ehrlich, 1997; Rucci, 1997); evolving technology (Ulrich, 1998, 1997; Alvares, 1997; Beer, 1997; Ellig,

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1997); fluid markets (Beer, 1997); globalization (Ulrich, 1998, 1997; Alvares, 1997; Beer, 1997; Burke, 1997; Ehrlich, 1997; Kerr & Von Glinow, 1997; Kochan 1997); outsourcing (Sincoff and Hall, 2004; Bates, 2003; HRfocus, 2002; Alvares, 1997); development of particular competencies beyond traditional ones (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Athey & Orth, 1999; Ulrich, 1998; Becker, Huselid, Pickus, & Spratt, 1997; Beer, 1997; Christensen, 1997; Ellig, 1997); interpersonal, intergroup, and inter-organizational relationships (Burke, 1997; Erlich, 1997); measurement and quantification of service (Burke, 1997); restructuring (Burke, 1997); the need to manage organizational change and the speed of change (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Ulrich, 1998, 1997; Burke, 1997; Rucci, 1997); the emergence of teams and the need to improve teamwork (Burke, 1997); timeshifts, or the blurring of time between work and personal activity (Burke, 1997); micro- and macro-organizational power shifts (Burke 1997); legislation (Ehrlich, 1997); increasing workforce diversity (Kochan, 1997); and, business ethics and integrity (Sincoff & Hall, 2004).

In a reversal of current thought arguing in favor of expanded roles for HR, Kerr and Von Glinow (1997) believe that many current trends in HR will be reversed in favor of more traditional activities. In short, we will have cycled HR from traditional to non-traditional and back to traditional.

Assuming these forces and pressures are real, one may ask what must those designing HR curricula do about them? From the conceptual literature, many proscriptions exist: design HR programs that contribute to an organization's strategic goals (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Adler & Lawler, 1999; Hunter, 1999; Kaufman, 1999, 1996); focus on intra-organizational development of HR personnel (Baill, 1999; Kaufman, 1996); become proficient at managing change (Brockbank, Ulrich & Beatty, 1999; Dyer, 1999; Kaufman, 1996); manage organizational culture (Brockbank, Ulrich & Beatty, 1999); outsource transactional activities (Brockbank, Ulrich & Beatty, 1999; Kaufman, 1996); become a business partner (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Dyer, 1999; Kaufman, 1996); cause HR to provide a competitive return on its investment (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Kaufman, 1994); develop traditional technical competency (Dyer, 1999); be competent in organizational development (Dyer, 1999); anticipate and manage organizational change effectively (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Dyer, 1999); emphasize analytical skills (Heneman, 1999); manage diversity (Kaufman, 1999); incorporate international perspective (Kaufman, 1999); and, develop proficiency with new technologies (Kaufman, 1996).

Conceptual Pieces on HR Education

Another set of conceptual articles deal with the desired educational experience necessary to prepare HR professionals for today's business environment, or what Heneman (1997) referred to as the "supply side characteristics of effective human resource professionals" (p. 97). Again, a variety of perspectives is offered, both in terms of the competencies needed by successful HR managers and the types of education appropriate for developing these competencies.

For example, under the broad rubric of "HR core skills," there appear to be two, possibly three, dominant opinions as to what constitutes them. First, there is the all-encompassing position of Brockbank, Ulrich, and Beatty (1999) who suggest mastery of so-called professional HR competencies including the "... concepts, language, logic, research, and practices of HR" (Brockbank et al., 1999, p. 111).

Second, there is Barber (1999), who argues in favor of teaching traditional HR content such as staffing and compensation, leadership skills such as communication and negotiation, and business fundamentals. This view is at least nominally supported by Dyer (1999) who suggests that HR core skills include those that will make the HR professional a business partner in the organization. Included are technical competencies like employee selection, training, compensation, and legal requirements; plus, organizational development technologies like team-building, organization design, and reengineering; plus, change management competencies and leadership skills enabling HR to move organizations in positive directions. Hunter (1999) maintains that HR education should produce graduates skilled not only in traditional HR disciplines, but also in general business, interpersonal behaviors, and technology. Previously, Brockbank (1997) had recommended that HR knowledge should include what he described as the emerging influences of information technology and globalization.

Consistent with this second opinion, Kaufman (1996) listed implications of HR changes and future needs to university programs in both Human Resources and Industrial Relations. Among the implications are: (1) programs that wish to grow must exploit a favorable geographic location, have an effective marketing program, or demonstrate superior ability to place graduates in good jobs; (2) augment basic HR coursework with accounting, finance, and operations while keeping total coursework hours within reason; (3) integrate business subjects and analysis into HR courses; (4) develop combination MBA/MLHR degrees; (5)

include more HR content in organizational behavior courses; (6) offer courses on total quality management and organizational change as well as applied HR research; (7) use case studies extensively; (8) stress computer literacy; (9) emphasize communication skills; and, (10) form interactive partnerships between HR programs and local businesses.

Finally, Heneman (1999) and Kaufman (1999, 1996, 1994) seem to be in the middle between these disparate views. Heneman (1999) is supportive of the notion that HR education should provide broad and traditional competencies that enable HR professionals to adapt to changes in fundamental workplace demands. And Kaufman (1996, 1994) acknowledges that HR education must provide traditional technical and administrative knowledge, while also filling the gap between that knowledge and that which is desired by businesses. Kaufman (1999) asks, then answers, the overriding conceptual question concerning contemporary HR education: "... is it to train students for jobs in industry or to provide a broad-based liberal education? The answer for most people is probably some of both" (Kaufman, 1999, p. 109). Conceptually, little seems to have changed since Kaufman answered his own question.

Representative of these various views is a mix of settings for teaching HR content. For example, at one university, the HR emphasis in the MBA program is based, in part, on discussions of business need between faculty curriculum designers and senior HR executives in an effort to design the curriculum to meet business requirements (Adler & Lawler, 1999). Course content ranges from creation of organizational environments to support employee involvement, to techniques for designing high performance organizations, to design of financial responsibility centers within an organization. Conversely, Baill (1999) reported that because business needs were not being met by freshly-minted HR graduates, one company developed a staffing model to hire professionals experienced as strategic business partners who had organizational development skills. Additional HR expertise was developed internally without university help. Finally, by way of example, the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), and the certification body, the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI), initially identified six HR functional areas: employment; placement and personnel planning; training and development; compensation and benefits; health, safety, and security; employee and labor relations; and, personnel research (Wiley, 1992). These have now been revised: management practices; general employment practices; staffing; human resource

development; compensation and benefits; employee and labor relations; and, health, safety, and security (Forman & Cohen, 1999). Presumably, university curricula, on-the-job-training, or the SHRM Learning System, if developed around these functional areas, will lead to sufficiently trained HR professionals.

Empirical Pieces on the HR Profession

Empirical studies on the current state of the HR profession are based on perceptions of HR practitioners, with data collected either through interviews or surveys. Although the practitioners in these studies were questioned about a variety of aspects of the field of HR, only those most relevant to the design of HR curricula are addressed here: skills needed by HR professionals, outsourcing of HR functions, and areas of knowledge in which HR practitioners are weak.

Core Skills Needed by HR Professionals

In a study of more than 1,000 HR professionals, Giannantonio and Hurley (2002) determined that the most important skills needed in HR graduates were people skills, active listening skills, and verbal [communication] skills. Regarding knowledge, the most important was ability to create a recruitment program, write a job description, complete a cost/benefit analysis, conduct training programs, and conduct a wage survey.

Hays and Kearney (2001) surveyed 482 members of two public sector HR professional organizations to determine the projected importance of 80 personnel techniques and activities in the year 2008. They found that the most important functions were anticipated to be training and development, managing information, staffing, responding to information requests, and benefits administration. The authors reported further that there would be a trend toward strategic issues, outsourcing, and increasing technology in the HR function.

Rynes, Colbert, and Brown (2002) surveyed 959 HR practitioners to determine if the beliefs of HR professionals differ from established research findings. They found fewer discrepancies between research findings and higher-level practitioners who read a lot, and many discrepancies between research findings and lower-level HR practitioners who were less well informed.

HRCI (2002) reported the relative importance of functional areas on its PHR and SPHR exams. For the PHR, the top three areas were (1) workforce planning and employment, (2) employee and labor relations, and (3) compensation and benefits. For the SPHR, the rankings were (1) strategic management, (2) employee

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and labor relations, with equal weight on (3) workforce planning and employment, and compensation and benefits.

So, we may ask quite legitimately, what skills and knowledge are needed by HR professionals according to those professionals? The answer seems to be three-fold: (1) general analytical skills; (2) broad communication skills, but particularly listening and reading; and (3) traditional HR knowledge skills in staffing, compensation, benefits, employee and labor relations, and strategic planning, HRIS, and training. Unfortunately, many of these traditional HR activities are transactional in nature and ripe for outsourcing.

Outsourcing of HR Functions

Respondents in the Giannantonio and Hurley (2002) study said they would be most likely to outsource functions like developing an HR information system, conducting wage and job satisfaction surveys, conducting a training program, and validating a selection instrument. Recall that Hays and Kearney (2001) reported that their respondents saw outsourcing of HR functions as commonplace by 2008.

Greer, Youngblood, and Gray (1999) conducted interviews with HR executives and professionals in 25 organizations to identify reasons for, and consequences of, outsourcing HR activity. They found that HR activities are outsourced to reduce costs, to obtain competitive advantage, to get the work done by someone who can do it better than you, to overcome a lack of credibility, to cover mistakes, and to eliminate repetitive tasks while moving toward a more strategic role. Once outsourced, functions tend to leave the organization permanently, and career development options are reduced for HR personnel.

Knowledge Deficiencies Among HR Practitioners

Rynes, Brown, and Colbert (2002) found that many HR practitioners are ignorant of HR-specific research findings, concluding that low knowledge bases may lead to less than optimal, even unsatisfactory, decisions.

Empirical Pieces on HR Education

Authors of the published research in this category surveyed HR practitioners, faculty, and/or students in HR programs to ascertain the appropriate content for an effective HR educational curriculum. Most of the surveys in these studies contained questions about knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level HR practitioners, and some compared existing curricula

content to the types of competencies needed at the entry level.

Entry-Level Proficiencies

Sincoff and Owen (2004b), surveyed 445 HR professionals who ranked EEO/AA, employee rights and responsibilities, recruitment, selection, and compensation as the most important knowledge areas for HR students to learn in order to be prepared for entry-level jobs. Further, the respondents ranked an "HR internship experience" as more valuable than PHR certification. Finally, the respondents indicated that understanding of workplace and societal trends was necessary for a broad understanding of HR, and the possession of good interpersonal communication skills (writing, speaking, reading, listening) was vital (Sincoff & Owen, 2004b).

Hansen (2002) identified four broad proficiency sets necessary for new graduates in HR/IR entry-level jobs: (1) HR/IR proficiencies - traditional nuts and bolts knowledge and skills; (2) business proficiencies - systematic knowledge of business and the broader business environment to help create profitable enterprises by adding value, aligning HR/IR activities with business needs, increasing profits, and controlling costs; (3) leadership proficiencies - to enable HR/IR personnel to become full-fledged organization decision-makers by influencing and inspiring others; and, (4) learning proficiencies - to bring newly discovered knowledge to current issues, and foster a spirit of inquiry. Hansen suggests adapting academic programs to help develop these proficiencies, but to do so with deliberate caution.

An earlier pilot study by Hansen et al. (Hansen, Berkley, Kaplan, Yu, Craig, Fitzpatrick, Seiler, Denby, Gheis, Ruelle, & Voss, 1996) contrasted the levels of skills needed by entry-level HR/IR graduates with those needed by employers. Employers identified communication skills as most important (written, active listening skills, and oral), followed by decision-making skills and analytical skills. These skills are consistent with the leadership proficiencies identified previously (Hansen, 2002).

Johnson and King (1999) investigated the relationship between curricula and the importance of various HR/IR competencies for entry-level practitioners to possess. The authors concluded that while HR/IR programs do an adequate job teaching classical (e.g., collective bargaining, legal issues) and traditional (e.g., benefits, compensation) concepts, they need to place more emphasis on personal competencies (e.g., formal

communication, interpersonal communication, integrity, managing relationships, problem-solving, technological ability).

Van Eynde and Tucker (1997) polled senior-level human resources executives to determine their views on entry-level skills needed by HR practitioners. Respondents were prohibited from naming general business topics. Primary knowledge and skills found useful were the strategic role of HR, compensation, EEO, performance evaluation, and organizational development. Given that the respondents were senior, experienced HR practitioners, the authors posited that they would focus on macro, not micro, issues; hence, the most important entry-level skill of strategic orientation.

Way (2002) surveyed members of a professional HR association and found that the most important courses for an entry-level practitioner (e.g., general human resources management, employment law, staffing, benefits, compensation, training and development) corresponded closely to the job duties of the respondents. On balance, general business courses were rated as less important than broad HR courses. Way (2002) also suggested that students should have the opportunity to develop HR competencies in ethics, motivation, communication, and persuasion.

Curriculum Evaluation

Way (1996) argued for congruence between HR/IR curricula and employers' needs. To accomplish this task he suggests frequent analyses of curricula with comparisons to student and employer needs. This view is supported by Johnson and King (1999) who stated that an alleged gap exists between what is taught in academic programs and what is desired by businesses, and by Langbert (2000) who indicated that educators are not always in tune with organization requirements. Because of the current abundance of HR/IR programs, Way (1996) also suggested that there is room for academic niche programs.

DISCUSSION

Our review of the literature does not suggest definitive coursework for university HR programs. Instead, it identifies an almost overwhelming amount of knowledge and skills deemed necessary for success as a professional in the field of HR. As Barber stated, even if the required competencies indicated by the literature review are consolidated into the three broad categories of traditional HR functions, organizational change, and business skills, "it is difficult to imagine a single [academic] program providing sufficient coverage"

(1999, p. 178). What, therefore, should we include in an HR curriculum?

A clear answer to this question is not found in the literature; however, three guidelines for formulating an effective HR curriculum can be derived from our review. The first stems from a statement by Brockbank, Ulrich, and Beatty (1999), which suggests that knowledge of traditional HR functions is the cornerstone of effective HR education:

Professions are characterized by unique knowledge and abilities; HR is no different. Mastery of HR knowledge comes from knowing the concepts, language, logic, research, and practices of HR. Mastery of abilities comes from being able to apply that knowledge to specific settings. Attorneys work to master the canon of knowledge in case law, and then demonstrate that knowledge as they offer specific legal advice. Physicians master the knowledge required by their specialty, then apply that knowledge to each patient's unique conditions (p. 111).

Exactly what constitutes the HR canon of knowledge continues to be debated, but there appears to be almost universal agreement on certain fundamental topics as part of the canon: recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, training, employee relations, and compensation/benefits. Further, based on our personal experience, we would add law and legal compliance. It thus seems reasonable to propose that these topics should be included in an HR curriculum.

A second guideline reflects the knowledge and skills needed to complement the HR canon of knowledge. Here again, although debate continues on the exact body of knowledge and skills necessary for HR professionals, scholars and practitioners agree on the desirability of two broad areas of knowledge, both of which enhance the ability of HR professionals to "tackle people-related business issues" (Schuler, 1990, p. 49). First, HR professionals need to understand organizational change. Second, HR professionals need basic business skills. These two areas of knowledge prepare HR professionals to understand the needs of line managers and tailor the organization's HR needs accordingly. To these, we would add that the HR curriculum needs to include instruction in critical thinking and analytical skills, plus communication skills in speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Sincoff & Owen, 2004b).

A third guideline is more a prescription for HR curriculum designers. We need to adopt a strategic

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perspective, recognizing that a single program cannot provide all of the HR knowledge required for a successful career in the field. As Barber pointed out, "debates geared toward identifying 'better' approaches - e.g., whether MBA degrees are better than MLHR or MLIR degrees, whether university education is 'better' than professional certification programs - are likely to generate significantly more heat than light" (1999, p. 181). In other words, identifying a "best" HR curriculum is not possible; any more than identifying a "best" organizational strategy is possible. Clearly, the issue is not "one size fits all." Instead, curriculum designers should recognize that the variety of HR career paths emerging as a result of the changes occurring in the rapidly-changing business world requires a variety of different programs appropriate for specific career stages; no one program can be all things to all people, and no single university has the resources to offer every program needed by HR professionals. In this sense, the most effective HR curricula will be based on consideration of how the programs offered fit into the career development of HR professionals (Barber, 1999). A careful evaluation of a university's internal strengths and weaknesses and its environmental opportunities and threats (i.e., a SWOT analysis) would be useful as a way for individual programs to choose an area of focus.

At the undergraduate level, for example, these guidelines suggest two general strategies for designing effective HR curricula in colleges of business. The first strategy, as reflected in most existing undergraduate programs, is to produce HR generalists whose career paths will likely start with jobs in the HR department of a large organization. The curriculum contains courses in each of the functional areas of business, as well as courses on the traditional functional areas of HR and on organizational change. Students graduate with broad knowledge but limited hands-on experience, prepared to start employment in an organization that typically rotates new hires across a variety of HR functions. Promotion to a management position within the HR department requires several years of experience and often the subsequent attainment of an advanced degree or certification in a specialized area of HR. Thus, graduates of undergraduate HR generalist programs should have the understanding that career progression in HR will require both experience and additional education.

The second strategy, far less typical of existing undergraduate HR programs, is to produce HR specialists from a program targeted at a narrow subset of HR functions. The increasing tendency for organizations to outsource HR functions supports the viability of this strategy for undergraduate education. The curriculum

contains courses in each of the functional areas of business, organizational change, and courses to provide depth on each of the targeted HR functional subset areas (e.g., recruitment/selection, or compensation/benefits). The targeted first job for these graduates is with an organization specializing in providing outsourced services to other organizations. The path to promotion for these graduates would be certification in the HR field of focus (e.g., compensation, benefits) or an advanced degree in the specialty field. Without additional education, or experience in additional HR functional areas, the career path for graduates of specialist programs is limited to specialty firms, but the number of such firms is increasing rapidly to fill the demand for outsourcing. One may argue that HR curricula should create students and professionals who are employable (i.e., who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be employed).

Graduate educational curricula can be designed to meet strategic goals in a similar fashion. Just as it is for those designing undergraduate curricula, the important question for graduate curricula designers to ask is, to whom will this program add value? For effective HR programs at both levels, the question will be answered in terms of the challenges facing HR in business, and the variety of career paths now open to HR professionals.

A Comment on Ethics

One final comment needs to be made here. From our literature review, the issue of teaching "ethics" or "business integrity," or even providing students with an ethical framework against which to evaluate their own behavior or the behavior of others, is not salient with respect to HR curriculum content, and, in fact, is largely unmentioned except occasionally (Sincoff & Hall, 2004; Way, 2002). While we believe that ethics and integrity are important HR curricular topics, especially in light of recent corporate scandals and highly publicized executive misbehavior, our literature review of what constitutes an effective HR curriculum simply does not support that belief.

CONCLUSION

In summary, our scrutiny of more than 50 recent studies about HR curricula leads us back to our opening comments. Curricula need to be appropriately broad in scope to stretch the minds of students and exceed that which is provided by vocational training. At the same time, they must provide students with skills and competencies that will allow them to succeed, whether as generalists or specialists. Unfortunately for HR

curriculum designers, there appears to be no consensus of opinion by experts as to the optimum breadth or depth of HR curricula or even whether such curricula should produce generalists or specialists.

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