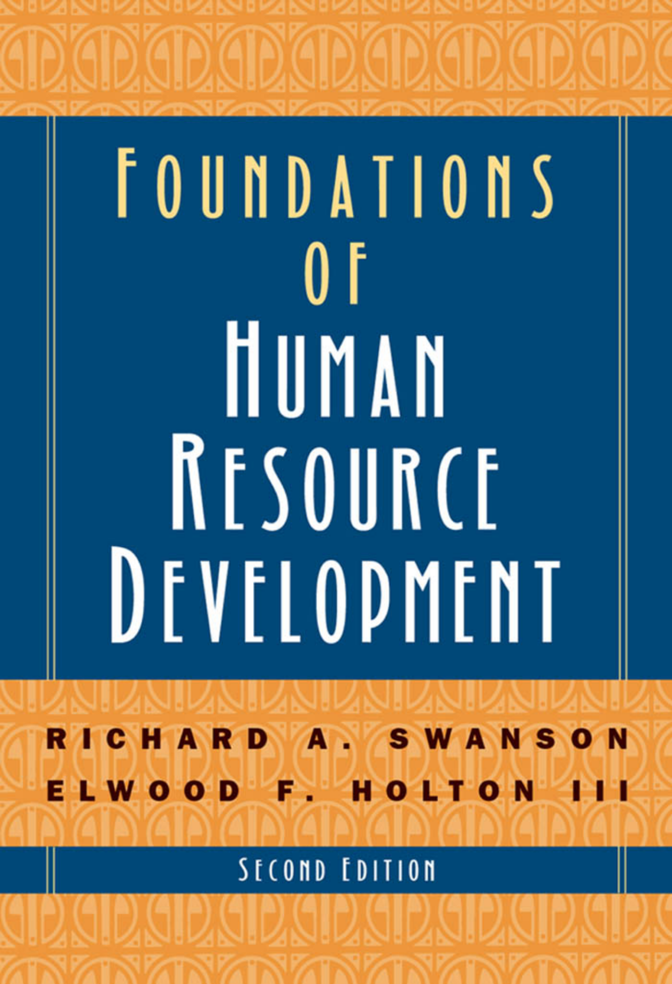

FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

RICHARD A. SWANSON
ELWOOD F. HOLTON III

SECOND EDITION

An Excerpt From

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Preface

Human resource development (HRD) is a very large field of practice and a relatively young academic discipline. Furthermore, HRD is deeply concerned with developing and unleashing expertise and with the dynamic issues of individual and organizational change. Such a profession requires a complete and thoughtful foundational text. That is the purpose of this book.

This book is intended to serve the needs of both practitioners and academics by adding clarity to their professional journeys. While the authors and contributors have personal preferences as to the purpose and primary means of doing HRD work, the attempt has been to provide a fair review of the range of major views that exist in the profession.

This is not a manual of practices book. Many books in HRD outline their version of "best practices" but do not probe the foundations of practice. This book does the opposite. For the most part, it defines the fundamentals while providing an overview of practice. Readers who seek a deeper understanding of theory and models that support best practice; who seek to understand the history and philosophies of HRD; who want to think more deeply about learning, performance, and change; and who prefer to be reflective about their practice rather than blindly following the latest formulas will find this book a refreshing and thoughtful explication of the field.

Because the discipline of HRD is young, there has been relatively little work to define the foundations of the field. The authors have struggled with this book to draw boundaries without building walls. Thus, this book continues the conversation about foundations. In a discipline as young as HRD, anything close to a consensus about its foundations will be a work in progress for many years.

This book is directed toward several audiences. First, it is designed for university courses in HRD. I argue that every HRD academic program needs a course that teaches field foundations. Second, HRD researchers will find the book a thought-provoking and useful guide to core research issues. Third, it is written for reflective practitioners who actively seek to lead the field as it grows and matures. Finally, almost every practitioner will find parts of the book that will add depth to their practice.

The book's twenty-one chapters are organized into seven parts. The first part, "Introduction to Human Resource Development," establishes a basic understanding of HRD; the general HRD model and the process it relies on to do its work; and the history of HRD. Part Two, "Theory and Philosophy in Human Resource Development," provides the critical theoretical and philosophical foundations of HRD. Both of these perspectives have generally been missing among HRD professionals and are believed to be essential for understanding and advancing the field. Part Three, "Perspectives of Human Resource Development," explores the learning and performance paradigms of HRD and associated models within each. This section attempts to clarify the learning-performance perspectives and their logical connection.

Part Four, "Developing Expertise through Training and Development," captures the essence of the training and development component of HRD as well as the nature of expertise. Illustrations of training and development practice employed in host organizations are presented along with variations in core thinking, processes, interventions, and tools. Part Five, "Unleashing Expertise through Organization Development," describes the essence of the organization development component of HRD as well as the nature of the change process. This section also presents examples of organization development as well as variations in core thinking, processes, interventions, and tools.

Part Six, "Advancing Human Resource Development," focuses on HRD's role in the high-level organizational and system-level issues of strategy, accountability, and HRD policy and planning. Part Seven, "Human Resource Development into the Future," addresses such contemporary issues as globalization, technology, and the identification of the challenges to HRD.

My sincere thanks go to the many HRD scholars throughout the world and their good work. They have made this book possible. While I am responsible for the updates in this second edition, a large number of the excellent ideas and writing contributions by Elwood F. Holton III have been carried forward from the first edition. Ed is known by all in the profession as a first-class HRD scholar and a person who has given much to the discipline.

In addition, I want to thank several HRD colleagues for providing in this second edition contributions related to their specializations: Alexandre Ardichvili, Theo J. Bastiaens, Thomas J. Chermack, Richard W. Herling, K. Peter Kuchinke, Sharon S. Naquin, Wendy E. A. Ruona, Richard J. Torraco, Greg G. Wang, and Karen E. Watkins. Their perspectives and voices add an important dimension to the book. Four outstanding scholars—Kenneth R. Bartlett, Susan A. Lynham, Walter R. Nord, and Barbara L. Swanson—provided important critical and constructive reviews of the book.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the organizational partners that provided support for this second edition. I am grateful for the support I received from Berrett-Koehler Publishers and the University of Texas at Tyler.

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http://richardswanson.com

CHAPTER 1

Human Resource Development as a Professional Field of Practice

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction

Purpose of HRD

Definition of HRD
  - Training and Development for New Technology
  - Organization Development for a Growing Company

Origins of HRD

HRD Context

HRD Core Beliefs

HRD as a Discipline and a Professional Field of Practice

Conclusion

Reflection Questions

INTRODUCTION

Human resource development (HRD) is a relatively young academic discipline but an old and well-established field of practice. The idea of human beings purposefully developing themselves in order to improve the conditions in which they live seems almost part of human nature. HRD theory and practice are deeply rooted in this developing and advancing perspective.

This first chapter serves to highlight the purpose, definition, origins, context, and core beliefs of HRD. These highlights provide an initial understanding of HRD and functions as an advanced organizer for the book. The chapters that follow fully explore the depth and range of thinking within the theory and practice of HRD.

PURPOSE OF HRD

HRD is about adult human beings functioning in productive systems. The purpose of HRD is to focus on the resource that humans bring to the success equation—both personal success and organizational system success. The two core threads of HRD are (1) individual and organizational learning, and (2) individual and organizational performance (Ruona, 2000; Swanson, 1996a; Watkins and Marsick, 1996). Although some view learning and performance as alternatives or rivals, most see them as partners in a formula for success. Thus, assessment of HRD successes or results can be categorized into the broad domains of learning and performance. In all cases, the intent is improvement.

DEFINITION OF HRD

HRD has numerous definitions. Throughout the book, we continually reflect on alternative views of HRD to expose readers to the range of thinking in the profession. The definition put forth is this book is as follows:

> HRD is a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance.

HRD efforts typically take place under the additional banners of "training and development" and "organization development" as well as numerous other titles. Figure 1.1 illustrates the definition and scope of HRD in such realms as performance improvement, organizational learning, career development, and management and leadership development (Swanson, 2008).

The alternative definitions of HRD that have been presented over the years mark the boundaries of the profession. Figure 1.2 (adapted from Weinberger, 1998) provides a historical report of the range of HRD definitions found in the literature.

You can think of HRD in more than one way. Our preferred definition describes HRD as a process. Using the process perspective, HRD can be thought of

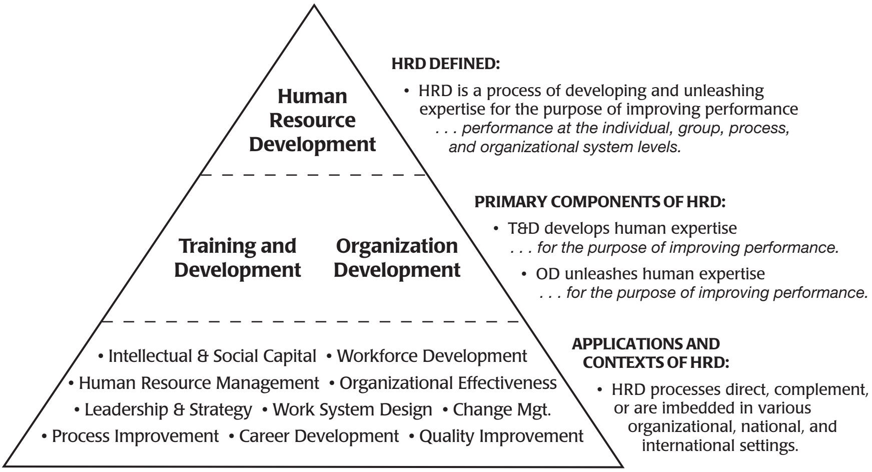
Human Resource Development
HRD DEFINED:
• HRD is a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving performance . . . performance at the individual, group, process, and organizational system levels.
Training and Development
Organization Development
PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF HRD:
• T&D develops human expertise . . . for the purpose of improving performance.
• OD unleashes human expertise . . . for the purpose of improving performance.
• Intellectual & Social Capital • Workforce Development
• Human Resource Management • Organizational Effectiveness
• Leadership & Strategy • Work System Design • Change Mgt.
• Process Improvement • Career Development • Quality Improvement
APPLICATIONS AND CONTEXTS OF HRD:
• HRD processes direct, complement, or are imbedded in various organizational, national, and international settings.

Figure 1.1 Human Resource Development: Definitions, Components, Applications, and Contexts
Source: Swanson, 2008.

as both a system and a journey. This perspective does not inform us as to who does HRD or where it resides in the organization. At the definitional level, it is useful to think about HRD as a process open to engaging different people at different times and located in different places inside and outside the host organization.

Another way to talk about HRD is to refer to it as a department, function, and job. It can be thought of as an HRD department or division in a particular organization with people working as HRD managers, specialists, and so forth. Furthermore, these people work in spaces called HRD centers, training rooms, retreat centers, and corporate universities. HRD can also be identified in terms of the context and content it supports—for example, training and organization development in insurance sales. Even under these department, function, job, and physical space titles, HRD can also be defined as a process.

Two major realms of practice take place within HRD. One is organization development (OD); the other is training and development (T&D). As their names imply, OD focuses at the organization level and connects with individuals, while T&D focuses on individuals and connects with the organization. The HRD literature regularly presents a wide variety of case studies from practice. The following are examples of T&D and OD practice.

Training and Development for New Technology

Plant modernization and technology implementation are strategies corporations use for productivity and quality improvement. Such efforts typically have parallel T&D efforts in planning and carrying out such change. Midwest Steel Corporation, for

Figure 1.2 Human Resource Development Definitions over Time

AUTHOR	DEFINITION	KEY COMPONENTS	UNDERLYING THEORIES
Harbison and Myers (1964)	Human resource development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in the society (p. 2).	High-level manpower and its full utilization	Development economics
Nadler (1970)	HRD is a series of organized activities conducted within a specified time and designed to produce behavioral change (p. 3).	Behavioral change; adult learning	Psychology
Jones (1981)	HRD is a systematic expansion of people's work-related abilities, focused on the attainment of both organization and personal goals (p. 188).	Performance, organizational, and personal goals	Philosophical; systems; psychology; economics
Chalofsky and Lincoln, (1983)	Discipline of HRD is the study of how individuals and groups in organizations change through learning.	Adult learning	Psychology
Swanson (1987)	HRD is a process of improving an organization's performance through the capabilities of its personnel. HRD includes activities dealing with work design, aptitude, expertise and motivation.	Organizational performance	Economics; psychology; systems
Smith, R. (1988)	HRD consists of programs and activities, direct and indirect, instructional and/or individual that positively affect the development of the individual and the productivity and profit of the organization (p. 1).	Training and development; organizational performance	Economics; systems; psychology
Watkins (1989)	HRD is the field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group, and organizational level of organizations. As such, it includes—but is not limited to—training, career development, and organizational development (p. 427).	Learning capacity; training and development; career development; organizational development	Psychology; systems; economics; performance improvement

Figure 1.2 Continued

Author	*Definition*	*Key Components*	*Underlying Theories*
McLagan (1989)	HRD is the integrated use of training and development, career development and organizational development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness (p. 7).	Training and development; career development; organizational development	Psychology; systems; economics
Gilley and England (1989)	HRD is organized learning activities arranged within an organization to improve performance and/or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual, and/or the organization (p. 5).	Learning activities; performance improvement	Psychology; systems; economics; performance improvement
Nadler and Nadler (1989)	HRD is organized learning experiences provided by employees within a specified period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth (p. 6).	Learning and performance improvement	Performance improvement; psychology
Smith (1990)	HRD is the process of determining the optimum methods of developing and improving the human resources of an organization and the systematic improvement of the performance and productivity of employees through training, education and development and leadership for the mutual attainment of organizational and personal goals (p. 16).	Performance improvement	Performance improvement; systems; psychology; economics
Chalofsky (1992)	HRD is the study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, collectives and organizations through the development and application of learning-based interventions for the purpose of optimizing human and organizational growth and effectiveness (p. 179).	Learning capacity; performance improvement	Systems; psychology; human performance

(Continued)

Figure 1.2 Continued

Author	*Definition*	*Key Components*	*Underlying Theories*
Marsick and Watkins (1994)	HRD as a combination of training, career development, and organizational development offers the theoretical integration needed to envision a learning organization, but it must also be positioned to act strategically throughout the organization (p. 355).	Training and development; career development; organizational development; learning organization	Human performance; organizational performance; systems; economics; psychology
Swanson (1995)	HRD is a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance (p. 208).	Training and development; organization development; performance improvement at the organization, work process, and individual levels	Systems; economics; psychology
McLean and McLean (2001)	HRD is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity (p. 313).		Development economics; psychology
Swanson (2009)	HRD is a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving organizational system, work process, team, and individual performance. *HRD efforts in organizations often take place under the additional banners of training and development, organization development, performance improvement, organizational learning, career management, leadership development, etc.*	Developing expertise; unleashing expertise; performance improvement	Systems; economics; psychology

example, utilized systematically developed structured training instead of an abbreviated vendor-provided overview presentation. The consequences were too great for Midwest Steel to be so casual about the installation of the new steelmaking technology. The T&D staff carried out a detailed analysis of the expertise required to operate the new ladle preheaters. This analysis served as the basis for the training program development, delivery, and evaluation of operator expertise. Furthermore, following the implementation of the T&D program, a cost-benefit analysis that compared production gains to training costs demonstrated a short-term 135 percent return on investment. Continued use of the structured training program resulted in even higher financial returns for the corporation (Martelli, 1998).

Organization Development for a Growing Company

A young and quickly growing company found itself working with systems and expertise inadequate for its present volume of business. The problems of creating and improving work systems were tackled head-on with the use of an organization development consultant. The consultant engaged employee groups in the following five-phase process: (1) building a new foundation, (2) high-involvement strategic planning, (3) assessment of people systems and technical systems, (4) implementing the new organization design, and (5) reflection, assessment, and next steps. The combination of learning, team planning and decision making, and employee involvement in implementing changes proved successful in advancing the company and creating a sense of employee ownership (Hardt, 1998).

ORIGINS OF HRD

It is easy to logically connect the origins of HRD to the history of humankind and the training required to survive or advance. While HRD is a relatively new term, training—the largest component of HRD—can be tracked back through the evolution of the human race. Chapter 3, on HRD's history, provides a long-range view of the profession. For now, it is important to recognize that contemporary HRD originated in the massive development effort that took place in the United States during World War II. Under the name of the "Training within Industry" project (Dooley, 1945), this massive development effort gave birth to (1) systematic performance-based training, (2) improvement of work processes, and (3) the improvement of human relations in the workplace—or contemporary HRD, as it began being called in the 1970s.

HRD CONTEXT

HRD almost always functions within the context of a host organization. The organization can be a corporation, business, industry, government agency, or nonprofit organization—large or small. The host organization is a system with mission-driven goals and outputs. In an international context, the host organization for HRD can be a nation. Strategic investment in HRD at this level can range from maintaining high-level national workforce competitiveness to fundamentally elevating a nation out of poverty and disarray.

The host organization may also be a multinational or global organization with operations in many continents and many nations. Such complex organizations can both affect the structure of HRD and be the focus of HRD work. HRD has traditionally been sensitive to culture within an organization and between organizations. Thus, making the transition to global issues has been relatively easy for HRD.

HRD can be thought of as a subsystem that functions within the larger host system for the purpose of advancing, supporting, harmonizing, and at times leading the host system. Take, for example, a company that produces and sells cars. Responsible HRD would be ever vigilant to this primary focus of the company and see itself as supporting, shaping, or leading the various elements of the complex automobile organizational system in which it functions. Much more will be said about this contextual reality of HRD in the following chapters. For now, it is important to think about the great variations in how HRD fits into any one organization, as well as the many varieties of organizations that exist in society. This complexity is compounded by the cultural variations in which HRD functions from region to region and nation to nation. While some find the milieu baffling, for others it is an interesting and exciting profession! For those who find HRD baffling and for those new to the profession, acquiring a solid orientation to the theory and practice of HRD as presented in this book will prove a sound investment.

HRD CORE BELIEFS

HRD professionals, functioning as individuals or work groups, rarely reveal their core beliefs. This is not to say that they do not have core beliefs. The reality is that most HRD professionals are busy, action-oriented people who have not taken the time to articulate their beliefs. Yet almost all decisions and actions on the part of HRD professionals are fundamentally influenced by subconscious core beliefs.

The idea of core beliefs is discussed in a number of places throughout this book. To describe what motivates and frames the HRD profession, we reveal for now one set of HRD core beliefs and a brief interpretation of each .

1. *Organizations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise to establish and achieve their goals.* This belief acknowledges that organizations are changeable and vulnerable. Organizations have been created by humankind and can soar or crumble, and HRD is intricately connected to the fate of any organization

2. *Human expertise is developed and maximized through HRD processes and should be applied for the mutual long-term and/or short-term benefits of the sponsoring organization and the individuals involved.* HRD professionals have powerful tools available to get others to think, accept, and act. The ethical concern is that these tools can be used for negative, harmful, or exploitative purposes. As a profession, HRD seeks positive ends and fair outcomes.
3. *HRD professionals are advocates of individual/group, work process, and organizational integrity.* HRD professionals typically have a very privileged position of accessing information that transcends the boundaries and levels of individuals, groups, work processes, and the organization. Access to rich information and the ability to see things that others may not also carries a responsibility. At times harmony is required, while at other times the blunt truth is required.

Gilley and Maycunich have set forth a set of principles to guide the profession. These principles can also be interpreted as a set of core beliefs. They contend that effective HRD practice

1. integrates eclectic theoretical disciplines;
2. is based on satisfying stakeholder needs and expectations;
3. is responsive but responsible;
4. uses evaluation as a continuous improvement process;
5. is designed to improve organization effectiveness;
6. relies on relationship mapping to enhance operational efficiency;
7. is linked to the organization's strategic business goals and objectives;
8. is based on partnerships;
9. is results oriented;
10. assumes credibility as essential;
11. utilizes strategic planning to help the organization integrate vision, mission, strategy, and practice;
12. relies on the analysis process to identify priorities;
13. is based on purposeful and meaningful measurement; and
14. promotes diversity and equity in the workplace (Gilley and Maycunich, 2000, pp.79–99).

Most sets of principles are based on core beliefs that may or may not be made explicit. The pressures for stating principles of practice are greater than for stating overarching beliefs. Both have a place, however, and deserve serious attention by the profession.

HRD AS A DISCIPLINE AND A PROFESSIONAL FIELD OF PRACTICE

The HRD profession and its components are large and widely recognized. As with any applied field that exists in a large number and variety of organizations, HRD can take on a variety of names and roles. This can be confusing to those outside the profession and sometimes confusing to those within the profession. We take the position that this variation is not always bad. We see this book, and HRD, as embracing the thinking that underlies

- training,
- training and development,
- employee development,
- technical training,
- management development,
- executive and leadership development,
- human performance technology,
- performance improvement,
- organization development,
- career development,
- scenario planning,
- organizational learning,
- change management, and
- coaching.

We also see this book, and HRD, as overlapping with the theory and practice underlying other closely linked domains, including the following:

- Workforce planning
- Organizational and process effectiveness
- Quality improvement
- Strategic organizational planning
- Human resource management (HRM)
- Human resources (HR)

Probably the most apparent connection is with the organizational use of the term “human resources” (HR). HR can be conceived as having two major components—HRD and HRM. As an umbrella term, HR is often confused with HRM goals and activities such as hiring, compensation, and compliance issues. Even when HRD and HRM are managed under the HR title, their relative foci tend to be fairly discrete and keyed to the terms “development” versus “management.”

CONCLUSION

The practice of HRD is dominated by positive intentions for improving the expertise of individuals, teams, work processes, and the overall organization. Most observers suggest that HRD evokes common-sense thinking and actions. This perspective has both positive and negative consequences. One positive consequence is the ease with which people are willing to contribute and participate in HRD processes. One negative consequence is that many people working in the field—both short-term and long-term—have little more than common sense to rely on. Having said this, we are reminded of the adage that "there is nothing common about common sense" (Deming, 1993). Common sense is the superficial assessment called face validity in the measurement and assessment profession. Something can appear to be valid but be dead wrong, while something can appear invalid and yet be right. For excellence in HRD, common sense is not enough.

The ultimate goal of this book is to reveal the underlying thinking and evidence supporting the HRD profession and its processes and tools, allowing HRD professionals to confidently accept and apply theories and tools that actually work, while at the same time ridding themselves of frivolous and invalid theories and practices. Foundational HRD theory and practice are the focus of this book.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Identify a definition of HRD presented in this chapter (see Figure 1.2) that makes the *most* sense to you and explain why.
2. Identify a definition of HRD presented in this chapter (see Figure 1.2) that makes the *least* sense to you and explain why.
3. Of the three HRD core beliefs presented in this chapter, which one is closest to your beliefs and why?
4. Based on the ideas presented in this chapter, what is it about HRD that interests you the most?

this material has been excerpted from

Foundations of Human Resource Development

by Richard A. Swanson and Elwood F. Holton III

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