

Significance of Human Resource Development

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Abstract

Organizations confront with many challenges as a new organisation culture crop up. The recent ASTD-sponsored study (mentioned earlier) presented eight emerging workplace trends that impact HRD. Along the same lines, Michael Hitt and his colleagues have identified increasing globalization and the technological revolution (in particular, the Internet) as two primary areas that enforce new environment. They suggest a number of actions that organizations have to address to the uncertainty and turbulence in the external environment.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, HRD, organizations, culture, environment.

Introduction

During the 1960s and 1970s, the professional trainers realized that their role extended beyond the training in classrooms. The move toward employee involvement in many organisations required trainers to coach and counsel employees. Training and development (T&D) competencies therefore expanded to include interpersonal skills such as coaching, group process facilitation, and problem solving. This additional emphasis on employee development inspired the ASTD to rename itself as the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

The 1980s saw even greater changes affecting the T&D field. At several ASTD national conferences held in the late 1970s and early 1980s, discussions centered on this rapidly expanding profession. As a result, ASTD approved the term *Human Resource Development* (HRD) to encompass this growth and change. Books by individuals such as Leonard and Zeace Nadler appeared in late 1980s and early 1990s, and these helped to clarify and define the HRD field. Further, in the 1990s and up to today, efforts have been made to strengthen the strategic role of HRD, that is, how HRD links to and supports the goals and objectives of the organisation.

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Functions of HRD

The original HR wheel from McLagan identified three primary HRD functions:

- (1) Training and development,
- (2) Organisation development, and
- (3) Career development.

Training and Development (T&D)

Training and development (T&D) focus on changing or improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals. Training typically involves providing employees the knowledge and skills needed to do a particular task or job, though attitude change may also be attempted. Developmental activities, in contrast, have a longer-term focus on preparing for future work responsibilities, by also increasing the capacities of employees to perform their current jobs.

Training and development activities begin when a new employee enters into the organisation, usually in the form of induction training i.e. employee orientation and skills training. Employee orientation is the process by which new employees learn important organisational values and norms, establish working relationships, and learn as to how to function within their jobs. The HRD staff and the hiring supervisor generally share the responsibility for designing the orientation process, conducting general orientation sessions, and begin the initial skills training. Skills and technical training programs then narrow down in scope to teach the new employee a particular skill or area of knowledge.

Once the new employees have become proficient in their jobs, HRD activities should focus more on developmental activities specifically, coaching and counseling. In the coaching process, individuals are encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions, to address any work-related problems, and to achieve and sustain superior levels of performance. Coaching involves treating employees as partners in achieving both personal and organisational goals. Counseling techniques are used to help employees deal with personal problems that may interfere with the achievement of these goals. Counseling programs may address such issues as substance abuse, stress management, smoking cessation, or fitness, nutrition and weight control.

HRD professionals are also responsible for coordinating management training and development programs to ensure that managers and supervisors have the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in their positions. These programs may include supervisory training, job rotation, seminars, or college and university courses.

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Organisation Development

Organisation development (OD) is defined as the process of enhancing the effectiveness of an organisational capabilities and the well-being of its members through planned interventions that apply behavioral science concepts. OD emphasizes both macro and micro level organisational changes; macro changes are intended to ultimately improve the effectiveness of the organisation, whereas micro changes are directed at individuals, small groups, and teams. For example, many organisations have sought to improve organisational capabilities by introducing employee involvement programs that require fundamental changes in work expectations, reward systems, and reporting procedures.

The role of the HRD professionals involved in an OD intervention is to function as a change agent. Facilitating change often requires consulting with and advising line managers on strategies that can be used to effect desired change. The HRD professional may also become directly involved in carrying out the intervention strategy, such as facilitating a meeting of the employees responsible for planning and implementing the actual change process.

Career Development

Career development is "an ongoing process by which individual's progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks." Career developments involve two distinct processes: career planning and career management. Career planning involves activities performed by an individual, often with the assistance of counselors and others, to assess his or her skills and abilities in order to establish a realistic career plan. Career management involves taking the necessary steps to achieve that plan, and generally focuses more on what the organisation can do for foster employee career development. There is a strong relationship between career development and T&D activities. Career plans can be implemented, at least in part, through an organisation's training programs.

Role and Competencies of HRD Professionals

A HRD professional must perform a wide variety of functional roles. A functional role is a specific set of tasks and expected outputs for a particular job, for example, classroom trainer or instructional designer. To carry out these various roles, HRD professionals need to possess many different skills or competencies. In their "Mapping the Future" study, Bernthal et al. described three areas of "foundational" competencies needed by all HRD professionals (see Fig. 1).

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Fig. 1

Foundational competencies are described in three areas: personal, interpersonal, and business/management. HRD professionals then make use of these foundational competencies as they develop particular areas of expertise. These areas of expertise are shown in the middle of the pyramid. Finally, the top of the pyramid shows four key roles for HRD professionals: learning strategist, business partner, project manager, and professional specialist.

The learning strategist is involved in the high-level decision making concerning how HRD initiatives will support the goals and strategies of the organization.

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Conclusion

Human Resource Development (HRD) actions include developing employee skills, effectively using new technology, developing new organizational structures, and building cultures that foster learning and innovation. These obviously have a great deal to do with human resource development.

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