

## **KEY ISSUES FACING HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

**ABHISHEK BHUSHAN SINGHAL & VIJAISHRI TIWARI**

IIIT Allahabad, Devghat, Jhalwa, Allahabad-211012, U. P., India

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper is based on one of the most dynamic area of my research. This area will first provide an analytical view of the key issues facing human resource development based on actual data that has been collected through interviewing experts in the field of human resource development and the data that has been collected through secondary sources including the books, journals and articles by credible authors on the study topic.

Various interviews have been scheduled with the experts to find out the key challenges that are being faced by the human resource development. The data collected has been analyzed to pin point the key challenges faced by the human resource development.

**KEYWORDS:** Key Challenges, Human Resource Development, Information Literacy

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the intensity and sophistication of business environment continues to multiply day by day, high level of continuous productivity along with superior performance is expected from organizations who long to remain competitive and satisfy the conflicting welfare of their stakeholders.

As a result, many businesses are becoming service oriented and thriving to excel by establishing exceptional relationships with their key customers, employees, vendors and other business partners. Adding to this, the never ending call to flexibility and the ability to adapt to change that accompanied globalization and digital revolution which altered the way business is being done to a great extent.

Many medium and large size corporations tend to confine human resource development to training activities as if it's the perfect remedy for all managerial and operational problems facing business. The time has come to move beyond viewing training as the sole measure to sustainable competitive advantage and to focus instead on applying a wide range of human resource development initiatives, for instance, promote learning and development and utilize the available volume of information by managing organizational knowledge.

In the modern world, information technology has become inseparable from human resource and capital in an organization. Initially, information technology played the peripheral role of administration and support. Today, firms consider it a source of revenue and a significant cog in managing processes and operations. Four critical factors attribute to this; intense competition, globalization, need for effective and efficient production and frequent changes in organization structure (Torrington et al 35). There has been a substantial shift towards knowledge based support and administration through the use of technological tools. Human resource technology can be worthwhile only if it meets the following goals as Mishra (2010) illustrates. (a) Strategic alignment. This must support business goals by helping the users; (b) Business intelligence; this should inculcate and inspire new learning's and insights. This can happen if the technology supplies the users with relevant data and information as well as answer critical questions; and (c) "Efficiency and effectiveness, which

must change the work that human resource personnel performs by dramatically improving their level of service, allowing more time for work value, and reducing costs”(Dubois et al 104).

## METHODOLOGY

I have employed a combination of data collection methods in this research. These methods include both primary and secondary data sources. This has enabled me to explore virtually all aspects of the study. It also helped me, to minimize bias in the data. This is because the multiple information collection methods will vet each other (Pratt & Loizos, 120).

Primary sources will involve interviews that I have conducted with few HRD experts.

The secondary data has been collected from books, journals and articles by credible authors on the study topic. These will supplement the primary data, which consumes more resources than secondary data.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Various definitions have been provided for the human resource development during the past few decades (Chien-Chi Tseng, Gary N. McLean, 2008; Gilley and Eggland, 1989; Lee, 2003; McCracken and Wallace, 2000; McLean and McLean, 2001; Nadler, 1983; Nadler and Wiggs, 1986; Smith, 1988; Swanson, 1996). The areas of professional practice that define Human Resource Development practice are generally categorized into three ie,

- (1) The Learning;
- (2) The Performance; and
- (3) The Change.

Swanson (1996), defined HRD as “ a process for the development and expertizing human through the organizational and the training programs for the people of the organization, so that their overall performance could be enhanced”.

Nadler (1983) defined HRD as “at a given period of time, organized learning experience so as to bring about the potentiality of change in performance or growth of the individual and the organization as a whole”. McLean and McLean (2001), described HRD is any process that, has the potential to develop over the short or the long period of time. McLean and McLean (2001), the results could be define as the abilities and the recognition for the development of the work-based knowledge, the expertise, the productivity, and the level of satisfaction.

Tanvir Kayani (2008), Human resource development has been considered as one of the most important area of research . The aim of the Human resource development policy is based on the development of the human resource.

Sriyen (1997),considered human resource development as a method of enhancing knowledge, skills and capacity of human resource in the society. In terms of economy, it could be described as accretion of human resource and its sustainable investment for the development of the economy. In political terms, HRD prepares the citizens of the country for participation in the political, democratic process of the country. In terms of social and culture, the human resource development aids people to live their lives to the fullest being developed to be richer and less on orthodox traditions.

Frederick and Charles (1964), considered the process of human resource development as the first step towards modernization.

Michael (2000), the concept of modernization and economic development represents the implicit and explicit values framework for the achievement of desirable goals. Mahatma Gandhi once said “realization of human potential”. A country that is unable to develop their human resource in terms of the enhancement of their skills and knowledge cannot utilize their abilities for the welfare of the nation and hence cannot develop anything else.

Tanvir Kayani(2008),The role of development of human resource is to improve the quality of life. Various economists argue that the human resources of a country determine the character and growth in the economic and social development of a country. Not gold and silver but only human resource of a nation can make a nation a great & strong.

Today the area of Human Resource Development has gone beyond training and employee development to the building of strong corporate strategy, individual learning, team learning, career development, internal consultancy, organizational learning, knowledge management(Easterby-Smith and Cunliffe, 2004; Walton, 1996).

(Becker, 1975; Schmidt & Lines, 2002; Harrison & Kessels, 2004) The central focus of the human resource development is on the human capital or the human resource. As the human resource in an organization, based on their competencies, skills, experience and knowledge, they are viewed as the driving force for the success of an organization.

Haslinda Abdullah (2009), A wide range of challenges are being faced by the organizations with regard to the management and implementation of training and development of human resource in the environment of emergence of new technologies and globalization which starts with the focus on human resource as capital in HRD practices, their development through education and training , learning, communication skills and language skills. For the Human resource development, learning and motivation of the human resource are also considered to be the most important feature of an effective human resource development process.

In the modern world, information technology has become inseparable from human resource and capital in an organization. Initially, information technology played the peripheral role of administration and support. Today, firms consider it a source of revenue and a significant cog in managing processes and operations. Four critical factors attribute to this; intense competition, globalization, need for effective and efficient production and frequent changes in organization structure (Torrington et al 35). There has been a substantial shift towards knowledge based support and administration through the use of technological tools. Human resource technology can be worthwhile only if it meets the following goals as Mishra (2010) illustrates. (a) Strategic alignment. This must support business goals by helping the users; (b) Business intelligence; this should inculcate and inspire new learning's and insights. This can happen if the technology supplies the users with relevant data and information as well as answer critical questions; and (c) “Efficiency and effectiveness, which must change the work that human resource personnel performs by dramatically improving their level of service, allowing more time for work value, and reducing costs”(Dubois et al 104).

Dmitry Kuchеров and Elena Zavyalova (2011) have proposed four groups for employer brand aspects;

- (a) Economic aspect (higher salary, system for rewards and bonuses, guarantees of employment and the works schedule);
- (b) Psychological aspect (robust corporate culture, positive interpersonal relations, team spirit );
- (c) Functional aspect (work content, perspectives of training, opportunities of career growth and to realize fully employees' knowledge and skills);
- (d) Organizational aspect (reputation of the company, status in the market, scope of activity, reputation of the top management personnel's)

He further examined three economic indicators the human resource turnover rate, the average share of human resource costs in the total cost of the company, the proportion between the annual human resource training budget and the annual compensation fund for the labours.

Swanson (1987) has proposed a technical training model which consists of five steps the first step is analysis of the needs of training, the second step is of designing the training process, the third step is the development of the training plan, the fourth step is the implementation and in the fifth step evaluation takes place.

Haslinda Abdullah (2009), however the drawbacks in the human resource training and development create a barrier to the effectiveness of the human resource development process in an organization. Adding to this, the changes that have been witnessed in the demographics of the workforce have made an impact on the human resource development process in terms of the formulation of the human resource strategies and the need for investment on the human resource training and development.

## **KEY ISSUES TO HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Lack of HRD Initiatives, in Line with Organizational Needs**

One of reasons that were stated for in congruency between HRD initiatives and organizational needs and objectives contends that the quality of people who work for the organization and their orientation often determines the kind of strategies and priorities that are set for the business. Most managers or executives are short sighted on what are the real needs of the organization - both short term and long term - at a given time.

This becomes even harder if you get a manager who adopts a single mode in dealing with situations of different natures i.e. following internal processes utterly at all times without exceptions. Organization members and especially leaders should maintain a more flexible attitude. For this reason, an effective team should have the right mixture of skills i.e. cost cutting during a down turn; which means the organizational outlook and direction could be shaped by implementing good recruitment and selection systems. In other words, people create organizational culture and set its priorities accordingly so focus on getting the right people and other things will follow suit.

Another explanation for this scenario is that the relationship between historical organizational developments and strategy were not established and emphasized properly, thus, the learning material could not be transferred to the job and perceived business benefits out of learning have not been realized.

Furthermore, HR is not seen as being strategic by many business leaders and hence this big gap exists and results in making wrong decisions such as unplanned allocation of resources and distribution of manpower which ultimately affects other business elements and cause organizational chaos.

### **Unfavorable Attitude of Senior Managers**

Another way of analyzing situation is accepting that managers face a lot of pressures and are always required to produce work that deliver immediate results and these endeavors to administer daily basis operations tend to distract them away from longer term development benefits. In other words, most of today's executives are too focused on short term and operational issues and has no stake in long term sustainability of the firm.

Except a limited few, most senior managers don't give the HR function the value it deserves yet. Hence, they don't get completely involved in the HR related initiatives. This in turn, leads to a failure in understanding the true business

needs by the HR. A lack of understanding about the importance and benefits of training and having a learning culture can be noticed among many organizations, especially those who adopt the old bureaucratic management style.

In addition, HRD is seen as a support function rather than a business partner by plenty of executives, in fact, most senior managers don't see how human capital can enhance their organization effectiveness and business results, and few HRD experts can play a role in that.

Also one of my interviewees' feels that due to not having supporting policies and procedures and proper corporate guidance. Focus falls mainly on areas that are obvious "revenue generators".

A Management Training Consultant sees that it's very unfortunate, but it is true that most senior managers despise, and/or lack consideration for, developing staff. They view it as waste of budgets and they fear spending on the human element due to the fact that loyalty towards the organization is questionable.

So, after examining what my candidates have to say, I believe that there is much HRD professionals can do to change the way managers perceive the HRD and its contribution to the business's bottom line. They may begin from wherever they see appropriate, but it's good to keep in mind that managers are also "people" who has certain needs and aspirations. If you, as an HRD professional succeed to make them contemplate on this reality, then it means that you are on your way to increase the number of managers who truly understand that supporting HRD initiatives is not an option but a responsibility of every successful manager these days.

### **Lack of Proper Financial Budget**

One of the respondents said that many of his clients are using the current economic situation to stall development in case of any downsizing that may be required suddenly. This attitude mixed with uncertainty would create a real challenge for a business as individuals and organizations are going to use this as an easy excuse to be exempted from taking any step towards continuous development & improvement which actually going to prevent them from becoming obsolete and worthless. Likewise, every future endeavor and growth plan for the business will be put a side awaiting the financial recession to depart; which is of course not a wise strategy.

You can also see a direct link between improper alignments of HRD & organizational objectives plus poor support of senior managers that would eventually results in the HR budget constraints.

It is also the perception that many business decision makers have to date when they see spending on developing and retaining human capital as a waste and not as a future investment. Part of it might be not possessing quantifiable measures to track ROI systematically can be the reason of unjustifiable HRD costs and thus budget restrictions by management.

This is one reason why HRD is not given due credit. When you deal with human related concerns, it's not possible to compute and produce figures all the time. When you deal with people, it's more about establishing mutual care & understanding which then develop into trust and commitment. Strictly speaking it's all about intangible, unquantifiable feelings and other complications that a traditional business mind executive doesn't want to delve into.

In other cases, whenever there is a budget constraint for whatever reason i.e. insufficient management of funds or an implied expense that hasn't been planned for initially, the decision makers' attention jump towards non-revenue generating functions like HRM & HRD followed by instructions on freezing hires, delaying bonuses or ceasing learning and development activities till further notice. Such actions convey the wrong messages to the employees in terms of how

much the company respects them and values their needs which then manifests as decreasing production levels and lower employee morale. As a result, service quality will sink and impact customer satisfaction and retention in a negative way.

### **Low Rate of Learning Transfer and Behaviour Change**

The reason for low rate of learning transfer and behavior change is that the learning material content is usually not applicable for the workplace. In other words, it is largely theoretical and difficult to be applied in the real work environment. Here comes the role learning and development specialists where they should maintain a broad picture of the business operations and performance measures by working cooperatively with line managers. This will enable them to identify whether training is needed to improve employees' performance and in that case design and develop learning interventions that are linked to business objectives as well as more pragmatic and relevant to the work context. However, the best training program ever designed cannot guarantee results without constant monitoring and appropriate follow up procedure. As mentioned earlier, the transfer of learning is not measured by the learning and development department or line managers, the reason why time, efforts and resources are deemed as a waste due to unavailability of systematic method of measuring such efforts. Most of the organizations are sending their employees to external training courses, but the same employees are not examined or tested after they come back from training. The supervisors are not following up on effectiveness of the training course that has been attended; neither the employee shares any of what he/she has learned on that course. Organizations are not aware of outcome of the investment they have made in developing the resources they have. In other words, this region lacks effective tools when it comes to measuring the impact of learning on business.

The causes of this issue are to be investigated and based on that, business leaders and HRD professionals should combine efforts to solve this problem. Managers, without doubt has an integral role to play to support employees in every step of their career. Normally, a very low percentage of employees implement and change their behavior after learning new skills. In fact, some undesirable attitudes of employees can never be fixed or changed, no matter what training you put them in because the cause may stem from stress in their work or personal lives or chronic disease, etc. For example if an employee is always thinking he is underpaid and demanding a raise in salary but it seems impossible, he/she will definitely lose interest in work and produce less than before, regardless manager's continuous efforts to bring desirables changes in employee's behavior. Behavior change is not a one way traffic, if the employer never change his behavior with the staff, the employees behavior can never be fixed and that draw back further becomes visible in the front line when it comes to the customer service and customer satisfaction. That's why it's always said that managers who lack leadership skills can be a shame to themselves, a nightmare to their subordinates and destruction to the business. Another feasible root of this issue is failing to link learning and training to core competencies. If this is the case, then it's highly possible to drift away from the main purpose why training interventions and training programs were planned and introduced in the first place. Tying learning and training to competencies leads to greater clarity and consistency around organisation's learning and development objectives, effective assessment of individuals' performance and precisely measurable learning outcomes that can be sensed and amended to suit changing circumstances.

### **Ineffective Learning Delivery**

HRD practitioners said that ineffective learning delivery could represent a potential concern to the company because learning and development budgets and costs could be increasing for ever without any obvious benefit to the business. In many organizations, the delivery of content is mostly modelled on school systems that are unsuitable for workplace learning. A contemporary approach to organizational learning heads from balancing tight work schedules with pressing learning needs. That's why, one of the benchmarks in the field of learning and development is the successful

implementation of e-learning initiatives which provides an excellent self paced learning platform for workers. When e-learning is implemented; it's essential to incorporate adequate technological interventions alongside appropriate pedagogy and back them up with organizational commitment in order to support the learning process.

### **Resistance of Employees to Learn and Develop**

Employee resistance to learn and develop is another point which was raised by many experts who asserted that this factor can affect the bottom line of the business. With a diverse workforce in terms of culture, gender, age, etc; you have 22 - 60 years age group workers in the organization. Willingness to learn can be facilitated but not forced upon. Making matured and experienced employees to learn while at work is what needs to be done. In addition, as the percentage of educated knowledge workers increases in the country and region on general, the drive for learning and growth is going to become higher.

Part of it is unique to the situation of a particular nation; however, other elements such as poor HR practices could be found almost everywhere which again a fruit of less strategic approach of business leaders and no counting HR as one of the business priorities as discussed earlier.

### **Lack of Resource for Learning and Development**

Under resourced learning and development function in the organization is one of the undeniable realities in contemporary businesses. HRD professionals admit that they are unable to attain their learning and development objectives due to scarcity of resources. The ongoing tension of not approving learning and development budget has been the case ever since. Furthermore, it's the first cost to be slashed during crisis. All these are consequences of the previous discussed issues like failing to understand how learning and development contributes to the overall business goals and non supportive managers who don't have the foresight to develop team, and decrease turnover. All these points lead to dearth of well-qualified learning and training professionals' and funds that could be used to carry out learning initiatives.

Resources also include all sorts of systems, tools, as well as learning material that will help the department to function and operate effectively. Recognizing the benefits of training and the importance of having a learning culture will definitely yield substantial benefits to the organization. In order to that, learning and development must be among the top business priorities. Other HRD specialists have also perceived other factors to impede the HRD facilitation such as inadequate implementation of e-Learning initiatives and content localization & translation especially when it comes to varying requirements of the business and unsuitability of standardized learning initiatives. This is because the learning activity for instance, needs to be designed and developed to bridge the existing performance gaps in any given business. Moreover, elements like geographical location, industry norms as well as organizational culture should be kept in mind while planning HRD initiatives. Besides, the company cannot introduce an intervention just because it's a huge hit in other markets or has shown great results with specific companies; the key principal is interventions are usually carried out to help companies either fix a deficiency or achieve a goal.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The discipline of Human Resource Development (HRD) grows in significance and influence to eventually manifest itself as business savior if employed effectively. We can all sense that in the emergence of key concepts such as Learning Organization, Knowledge Management and Human Capital which are frequently being mentioned by corporate leaders who still struggle to formulate practical strategies to incorporate them in organizational settings. No matter how much an organization spends in capital, human resource remains the key determinant of an organization's success. This is

because the quality of human resource directly influences the quality of goods or services that an institution or business offers to its consumers. Institutions, therefore, have an obligation to ensure their personnel get continuous exposure to information and skills that can better their performance.

## REFERENCES

1. Pratt, Brian and Loizos, Peter. Choosing Research Methods: Data Collection for Development Workers Oxford, UK: Oxfam Publishers, 2003.
2. Sleezer, Catherine, Wentling, Tim, and Cude, Roger. Human Resource Development and Information Technology: Making Global Connections. New York, NY: Springer Publishers, 2002.
3. Barefoot, Betsy. "Bridging the Chasm: First-Year Students and the Library," Chronicle of Higher Education, 52 (January 20, 2006): 14.
4. Chauhan, Suresh, Prem, Chand, and Murthy, TAV. "Information Literacy for Indian Academicians: INFLIBNET Initiatives", Journal of Library and Information Science 31.6 (June, 2006): 48.
5. Chien-Chi Tseng, Gary N. McLean, (2008),"Strategic HRD practices as key factors in organizational learning", Journal of European Industrial Training, Vol. 32 Iss: 6 pp. 418 – 432
6. Varalakshmi, R.S.R. "Information Literacy Models: An Indian Perspective", Journal of Library and Information Science 32.4 (June, 2007): 49.
7. Kanamadi, Satish and Vichare, Visakha, "Information Literacy Programmes for Social Scientists: A tool for harvesting e-resources", SRELS Journal of Information Management 43.33 (2006): 34.
8. Dmitry Kuchеров, Elena Zavyalova, (2012),"HRD practices and talent management in the companies with the employer brand", European Journal of Training and Development, Vol. 36 Iss: 1 pp. 86 - 104
9. Sawson, R.A. (1987) Training Technology System: A method for identifying and solving training problems in industry and business. Journal of Industrial teacher Education, 24(4), 7-17.
10. Gilley, J. and Eggland, S.A. (1989), Principle of Human Resource Development, Perseus, Cambridge.
11. Lee, M. (2003), HRD in a Complex World, Routledge, New York, NY.
12. McCracken, M. and Wallace, M. (2000), "Towards a redefinition of strategic HRD", Journal of European Industrial Training, Vol. 24 No. 5, pp. 281-90.
13. McLean, G.N. and McLean, L.D. (2001), "If we can't define HRD in one country, how can we define it in an international context?" Human Resource Development International, Vol. 4No. 3, pp. 313-26.
14. Nadler, L. (1983), Human Resource Development: The Perspective of Business and Industry, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
15. Nadler, L. and Wiggs, G. (1986), Managing Human Resource Development: A Practical Guide, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
16. Smith, R. (1988), Human Resource Development: An Overview, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC.



17. Swanson, R.A. (1996), "In praise of the dependent variable", *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 203-7.
18. Easterby-Smith, M. P. V. and Cunliffe, A. (2004) *From reflection to practical reflexivity: experiential learning as lived experience*, in: P. M. Reynolds and R. Vince (Eds) *Organizing Reflection* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 30 – 46.
19. Walton, J. S. (1996) *The provision of learning support for non-employees*, in: J. Stewart and J. McGoldrick (Eds) *Human Resource Development: Perspectives, Strategies and Practice*, pp. 120 – 37 (London: Pitman).
20. Haslinda Abdullah (2009), "Major challenges to the effective management of human resource training and development activities", *The Journal of International Social Research* Volume 2 / 8.
21. Becker, G. S. (1975) *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (2nd Ed.). National Bureau of Economic Research. New York: Columbia University Press.
22. Schmidt, J. & Lines, S. (2002) *A measure of success*. *People Management*, 8 (9): pp.32.
23. Harrison, R. and Kessels, J. (2004) *Human Resource Development in a Knowledge Economy: An Organisational View*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
24. Frederick, H. and Charles A. (1964). *Myers Education, Manpower and Economic Growth: Strategies of Human Resources Development* (McGraw-Hill, USA).
25. Sriyan, D. S. (1997). *Human Resources Development for Competitiveness: A Priority for Employers*. ILO Workshop on Employers' Organizations in Asia Pacific in the Twenty First Century, Turin, Italy.
26. Michael, P.T. (2000). *Economic Development* (7th Edition). An Imprint of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. New York. pp. 7-12, 326-328.
27. Tanvir Kayani (2008), *Challenges of Human Resource Development to Pace with Globalization*, Faculty of advanced integrated studies and research (ms/hrd), National University of modern languages, Islamabad.
28. Furjanic, Sheila W., and Laurie A. Trotman. *Turning Training Into Learning: How to Design and Deliver Programs That Get Results*. 1601 Broadway, New York: AMACOM Books, 2000. Print.
29. Drew, Stephen, and Pete Smith. "The Learning Organization: Change Proofing And Strategy." *Learning Organization* 2.1 (1995): 4-14. Print.
30. Belasen, Alan T. *Leading the Learning Organization: Communication and Competencies for Managing Change*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999. Print.
31. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., May 2010. Web. 17 Sept. 2011. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>.