



Edited by

Mark Loon · Jim Stewart · Stefanos Nachmias

The Future of HRD, Volume II

Change, Disruption
and Action

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The Future of HRD, Volume II

“This outstanding and timely volume brings together a group of distinguished scholars and practitioners who make a provocative advance with their richly textured submissions that people in organisations and businesses matter. That investing in humans as a resource makes good business sense and results in an excellent return on investment. As the world recalibrates during and post Covid-19, the high-quality scholarly submissions in this volume provide institutions and organisations with workable and pragmatic guidance on how to develop this resource. The volume offers easy and accessible ideas to help shape innovative thinking in human resource development, which keeps pace with new developments in how learning happens in organisations and businesses—small and large. Volume 2 is timely and a compelling read which gives us grounds to imagine that a better world is possible. This volume should be mandatory reading for anyone with a stake in human resource development in the New Normal a world post-Covid-19. It provides a productive and doable map into the future of human resource development. Chapter-by-chapter Volume 2 builds the users confidence to unlock the possibilities for a sound, and productive approach to human resource development in a new world perhaps changed forever by a pandemic, worldwide protests for racial equality and social justice, and continuing concern for environmental degradation.”

—Ruksana Osman, *Professor Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa UNESCO Research
Chair in Teacher Education for Diversity and Development*

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Stefanos Nachmias
Editors

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Preface

Change is occurring a lot more quickly and in ways we thought it would not have been possible. Never say never. Organisations are investing more in people so that they are more versatile, flexible and ambidextrous in dealing with what the future may throw at them, even unexpectedly. Of course, such trends are only good news for Human Resource Development (HRD). HRD practitioners and scholars have been arguing and demonstrating through evidence that people are the cornerstone of many organisations. Enhancing the effectiveness of HRD practices is a worthwhile investment.

Indeed, this view is echoed by many organisations around the world and one can see tangible progress made. For example, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) established Technical Committee 260 (TC 260) to develop a series of international standards in practice of human resource management. TC 260 is growing every year with new standards developed and more in the pipeline. These standards are an important development because not only it provides workable and pragmatic guidance to organisations and practitioners but there is an implicit message that says treating people with respect and developing them to their full potential is pivotal and deserves more international attention and action.

An important development from ISO TC 260 is the development of a standard on human capital for external reporting. While this idea has been around for decades and there have many different variations of how such a report might look, the publication of this standard by ISO gives it the credence and global appeal that some of its peers may not have had. The significance of this standard is that it appeals to investors and shareholders. Demand and pressure from these stakeholders will not only add to the voice of practitioners and regulators for priority to be given to people, but it will ensure more transparency of how this happens and monitor material outcomes. Recently, the World Federation of People Management Associations and European Association for People Management have teamed up with the University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD) to re-energise an international journal on HRD that provides an equal emphasis on works by practitioners and academics for scholarship and practice.

We are heading in the right direction.

This volume complements this positive progress as it serves as a check-point to take stock. The field of Human Resource Development is a broad field and is amenable to different lenses, for example, psychology or sociology, and methods, for example, from nomological to autoethnographic approaches. Given the breadth and depth of research, we asked ourselves what do we now know about HRD as a practice, what have researchers found that works and how do we make it work for the future? These questions have served to motivate this volume 'Future of HRD: Foresight from Insight'. Volume 2 offers a more practical assessment on how HRD can drive change, and even performance, at individual and organisational levels through the adoption of good practices. This volume offers the reader a crucial foresight on how HRD's response to current issues and whether modern organisations should make changes to the way learning is being developed in the workplace. Volume 2 is a highly reflective, critical and insightful assessment on the foundations of HRD in the workplace.

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Stefanos Nachmias

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1

Introduction to the Volume: Future of Human Resource Development

Stefanos Nachmias and Mark Loon

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background to the Volume

The purpose of this section is to introduce the reader to the main themes of the book. It seeks to outline the key context and concepts explored across the chapters and enables the reader to examine the importance of understanding future trends in human resource development (HRD) across the globe. The idea of producing this volume arose from the 20th University Forum for Human Resource Development conference, in Nottingham. Participants across the globe travelled to the city to advance

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HRD thinking and practices and, together, celebrate the achievement of the HRD community. This was a great platform to debate how organisations prepare themselves to address future HRD in establishing effective organisations. It was the beginning of this journey to produce a set of chapters that offer the reader insightful knowledge on how to address future challenges and opportunities. It is simply not enough to highlight the important role of academic debate in organisational development, but to produce resources that can have a meaningful impact upon organisational and individual thinking. It is essential to explore how HRD influences organisations and individuals from a multi-level perspective. This entails considering the effect of context, both internally and externally, as well as employee perceptions and understanding of HRD and what this means for learning, creativity and growth. Coronavirus disease of 2019 (Covid-19) reinforces this point and the needs for HRD to shape future practices including innovation, performance, flexibility, well-being and management behaviour. The scale of the change is extraordinary as the pandemic has drastically changed the way we work, communicate and socialise in just a few days. Therefore, this volume could not be more timely given the new realities that everyone is now facing. We need to rethink how we learn, how we implement learning activities, identify new methods of learning resources and, most importantly, how technology can change the way HRD is perceived by the academic and professional community.

At a personal level, we sometimes not only found it difficult to deal with the level of ignorance amongst individuals but, most importantly, to understand existing management perceptions in addressing organisational HRD needs. We believe that any attempt to fully utilise HRD principles requires sufficient knowledge (at both individual and organisational levels), effective leadership skills and appropriate assessment of the wider business environment. It is now the time to take effective actions in changing old-fashioned perceptions on learning and development and offer the space so that organisations can feel secure in making effective changes through evidence-based information. In an increasingly technology-driven business environment, significant changes are taking place which are challenging long-standing assumptions about the nature of work and the roles that humans will play in the workforce of the future

(Schwab 2016; Manyika 2017). The following section provides a further assessment of how HRD can respond to some of these challenges and changes in the future.

1.1.2 Status and Future of Human Resource Development

Over the last few decades, HRD professionals have been the cornerstone for organisational and individuals' development. Literature provides insightful assessment on the status of HRD in business. Short et al. (2009) argued that HRD is a 'weakened profession' (p. 421) due to the lack of necessary influence to change management practices. As MacKenzie et al. (2012) stated HRD failed to provide real change to organisations. Its origins in training and the close links to the fields of human resource management (HRM) and organisational development (OD) offers more ambiguity with the underpinning role of HRD in organisations' lives. Probably, this argument does not come as a surprise as we know that organisational realities offer little room to acknowledge the emerging nature of HRD to the success of any organisations. Since the late 1980s, McLagan (1983) and McGoldrick and Stewart (1996) have been highlighting the need to recognise the interrelatedness of the fields of HRD and the mutual maximisation of human resource potential in organisations. Nevertheless, we still fail to discuss criticisms about the applicability of HRD in modern organisations and whether the profession should be a distinctive part of the management debate. We know that HRD is the framework for helping employees develop their personal and organisational skills, knowledge and abilities. It can offer significant opportunities for individuals to encourage and continue to develop essential skills needed to remain competitive. However, the question is can we still afford to debate the nature and significance of HRD in modern organisations? Is there enough time to assess whether the development of skills and capabilities should be a core activity in organisational strategic planning? The answer might not be straightforward as the future looks less certain and clear; however, Covid-19 does not leave us with any room for discussion. Future change is inevitable. There is a profound

shift in organisational thinking as the effects of the virus on our society highlights that technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and the internet are the only way to provide a capable transformation for generations to come with less disruption, unpredictability and future surprises. Scholars have documented examples of technology's effects on how work is performed (Autor et al. 2003; Manyika et al. 2017), how new technologies are developed (Bergvall-Kåreborn and Howcroft 2013) and the rapidly changing skill requirements (Bell and Kozlowski 2002). In a recent article from Harvard Business Review (2019), Bersin and Zao-Saunders argued that opportunities for development have become the second most important factor in workplace happiness (after the nature of the work itself). Although most organisations might be reluctant to acknowledge its importance, identifying new skills and capabilities still remains a major business challenge. This means that HRD professionals should be responsible to embrace and lead organisational change and build individual capacity. It is the right time to change current trends on learning and invest more in changing skills requirements. The pandemic will 'force' organisations to reconsider their overall philosophy on learning, development and retention. After all, learning is a rising tide that lifts all boats (Bersin and Zao-Saunders 2019).

This volume offers some 'comfort' to those challenges as all chapters offer a critical assessment on some of the factors shaping the future of HRD. These include factors that drive change and shape the future of HRD including the effects of technology, economics and financial considerations, globalisation and the changing nature and organisation of work. Rapid and ongoing changes in the nature of work itself are changing the relationship between learning and work and making learning more integrated and connected than ever before. Covid-19 and changing demographics are simply a few factors for such a change. For example, the UK workforce has grown by 600,000 since 2010, with 60% of the growth from women entering the workforce. There are 16 million people in the UK aged 20–40 years and 17 million between 45 and 65 years. In 2000, 17 million people in the UK were aged 20–40 years and 14 million between 45 and 65 years (Department for Work and Retirement 2020). Such changes offer a unique opportunity to build robust work-centred learning programmes, helping people consume information and upgrade

their skills related to future jobs (Deloitte 2019). To achieve that, HR policies should be revisited to encourage a much more people-centred approach and focus less on matching supply and demand at the lowest cost resulting, for example, in low policies. There is a need to change management attitudes towards HRD and approach change as being evolutionary rather than revolutionary. This entails continuous, informal, social learning and requires HRD professionals to become competent in creating the conditions for this to occur. The skill of implementing HRD under times of extreme change might be the tool to overcome challenges regarding its status and, most importantly, to offer effective solutions in the future. Deloitte's (2020) future of HR in 2030 report suggests that there will be a better HRD skillset provision towards greater business understanding, change management, organisation development and use of new technologies. The report also emphasises that the skill of learning will become increasingly important and people will need to be helped to become even more effective at learning for themselves and with others.

1.2 Think and Act: Newbies, Covid-19 and Working from Home

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 virus left us with the challenge of making significant changes in our lives. The government's requirements to stop business activities and social interaction has shifted the debate on organisational life with the use of different terminologies (for most people) including virtual meetings, virtual desks, online software, e-learning and millions of videos on how to work from home. Professionals across all industries have ended up working from home (WFH) having to navigate themselves into complex software and activities. These are the so-called newbies as they have limited experience working from home and use technology as a main work activity. There is no doubt that this is probably the most intense period of their professional life as the change of pace is unprecedented. Those who have had a significant experience of remote working are now the experts in supporting organisational strategy on remote work. It is clear that the new reality puts the newbies in the

spotlight of the HRD policy development and organisations' response to online working practices. Working from Home is suddenly perceived as the norm rather than the privilege of few individuals. Those academic and professionals that, for years have been asking for more flexibility, the introduction of e-learning and less paperwork, should be celebrating. It is now a reality. Even the more sceptical or the so-called people in denial now find that WFH is not as challenging as they thought. Of course, we should not underestimate the psychological effects of remote working and the pressures for learning fast within just a few days. Nevertheless, most organisations' response to Covid-19 demonstrates that flexible, remote work can be achieved. Concerns about authority, lack of collaboration, socialisation and effectiveness of communication (Chen and Wu 2015) are seen as secondary issues putting pressure on HRD/HRM professionals to offer solutions to current learning gaps. What is now clear is that the newbies (either by choice or not) have been transformed into an inevitable force for organisational change. They are currently the leading force on organisational response to WFH reiterating the argument that it is now the right time for HRD to act as a strategic partner in supporting future organisational activities. We need to turn HRD, e-learning, distance learning, self-learning and online learning from being fashionable to normal, relevant and important dimensions for professional development. Uncertainty about the duration of social distancing, self-isolation and business operation restrictions offers a unique opportunity to think and reassess past practices. We need to make decisions on how skills will be utilised and whether current learning policies are in line with the new realities. There is a need for a lot of work, but, more work will eventually produce more balanced and well-structured organisations.

The above analysis shows that HRD as a profession has a great future. It is now the right time to re-recognise the value of learning in the workplace and challenge current assumptions that on-going, independent, social and informal learning is expensive and ineffective. A recent global event shows that HRD is a strategic tool adding value to organisations and addressing unexpected changes in working patterns. Learning is a skill and line managers should be able to develop appropriate activities to help the learning process. Of course, not everyone approaches learning from the same perspective; nevertheless, organisational learning could

offer the ‘right’ platform for effective change and future development. The Institute for Employment Studies (2008) highlights the need to start valuing learning (again) as generational values and employment practices are constantly changing. We know that the millennials approach work differently from baby boomers with organisations having to develop structures in addressing complex individual needs. In a knowledge society, where information and new communications technologies have profoundly changed organisational activities, HRD could be the ‘Wisdom of Crowds’ to enable leaders and managers approach to proactively respond to future challenges and opportunities. There is no doubt that the virtual world, social networks, e-learning and flexible employment will dominate future organisational strategic practices. Let’s hope that HRD will be used as an effective tool to support changes.

1.2.1 Think and Act: Learning Is the ‘Queen’

In the first scenario, HRD stills acts as an operational tool to simply address legal and administrative requirements. Lessons that we learn from Covid-19 would not generate any action and we would simply go back to normal life, ‘this is how we use to do things around here’. The second scenario is for HRD to be partly used as a strategic dimension in order to support some organisational changes. This depends on the sector, management structure, leadership attitude and industry practices as well as on whether skills/knowledge could be identified in the labour market. Organisations that have been using HRD practices might advance them further; other organisations might start thinking to implement new forms of learning and development. The final scenario is that HRD is genuinely embraced as a driving factor in business success and individual fulfilment. HRD activities are not seen as purely remedial for fixing people’s weaknesses but are regarded as an integral part of people’s on-going growth and contribution. Regardless of the scenario, the impact of HRD on organisational performance has been clearly demonstrated so that the focus is no longer on whether development activities deliver a return on investment, but more on how to maximise the benefits of that investment. HRD could act as the ‘Queen’ on organisational future decisions

and offer new insights into how they can address key challenges in the future.

Therefore, it is clear that HRD has to make changes in response to current situations. As these factors drive change and shape the future, organisations, workplaces, communities, policy makers and global networks have a great opportunity to influence and transcend HRD. And, most importantly, HRD activities with impact and effectiveness. This volume offers some assessment on what the future might look like, emphasising the importance to transform work, organisations and the global economy. New technologies, innovative work activities and new skills requirements and demographic changes should be not seen as a barrier but as an opportunity for people to learn.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The scope of volume 2 is to provide individuals, professionals and organisations with a collection of chapters that offers a more practical assessment on how HRD can drive change at individual and organisational levels through the adoption of various good practices. Organisations of all types and sizes have to engage in learning activities that satisfy current and future capability needs. HRD offers systematic and planned activities to provide individuals with the opportunity to learn necessary skills to meet job demands. Synchrony of practices at the individual and organisational levels is essential to ensure that HRD can shape future practices. The scope is to offer the reader a crucial foresight on how HRD responds to current issues and whether modern organisations should make changes to the way learning is being developed in the workplace. It offers a highly reflective, critical and insightful assessment on broad perspectives of the strategic nature of HRD in developing strategic and organisation-wide capabilities for future success.

This establishes a platform where international scholars can debate the role of HRD in creating the future dynamic workplace. Our scope is to provide a different framing and challenge the current status quo on HRD future practices. As the world of work grows ever more complex, diverse and ambiguous, there is a growing emphasis on how technology,

globalisation, changing workforce demographics and talent development can play a greater role in developing organisations for the future. In this context, HRD is a critical tool to address current complexity and offer solutions to organisational learning needs. This volume brings together a number of lead thinkers: academics, practitioners and consultants who are active in the debate about the future of HRD. They have been tasked with evaluating debate and assessing various angles and producing a number of case studies, new insights, innovative strategies and new thinking that capture the complexity of global practices. This is essential to support future changes on how leaders make HRD decisions, develop organisational capability and assess future talent opportunities.

The hope is that the book offers the reader a variety of useful and positive learning resources around the subject. There are many HRD books in the market; however, most of the publications focus on explaining academic debates rather than addressing the important question of how organisations survive and thrive in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment. This volume responds to the call on how learning can be used to address future needs. It captures the complex world of digitalisation and quality of work and offers the reader a blend of academic, practical and professional insights into the topic. It also provides organisations and professionals with opportunities to assess strong and explicit perspectives on practice implications and future changes that could be used to generate debates in a learning context. All contributors have been tasked to provide a number of practical, operational and strategic recommendations assessing current organisational realities.

1.4 Book Context

Regardless of the academic perspective, there is no doubt that policy makers, organisations and individuals need to gain a new insight into the future of HRD practice. We live in a highly uncertain and violent environment where organisations have been forced to change their practices. To achieve that, learning and development has been seen as the main tool to satisfy current changes and, most importantly, to support future strategic changes. There is no denying that everyone has been asked to use a

new software, watch a new webinar or even complete an online learning activity. This is actually the norm in an attempt to address the unprecedented effect of the pandemic to working practices. We also struggle to understand how to complete our tasks online and, above all, to assess what we should be doing to develop those online skills needed to satisfy organisational needs. This volume is very timely as Covid-19 will completely change the way we structure, manage and organise organisations in the future. Our hope is that the chapters in volume 2 can generate a positive action in enabling organisations and policy makers to change current practices and address future challenges. Building management commitment and accountability is key in any successful HRD policy implementation.

Reflecting the issues briefly outlined above, the book is structured into ten insightful chapters considering various aspects of HRD at organisational, individual and policymaking perspectives. Contributors have used a number of different tools to assess key issues through primary research, experiential assessment and case studies. Maintaining respondent confidentiality while protecting the identities of the individuals who participated in the book is critical. Hence we have used pseudonyms for any individual names across all chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introductory assessment of the book's key dimensions and offers an insight into the key themes on the future of HRD. The chapter allows the reader to get an overview of the context and access the key objectives of the book.

Chapter 2 offers a critical assessment of Governance in Public Administration and presents a new HRD model as the nucleus of Governance. The scope is to explore which are the more relevant research concepts of the HRD Dimension of a Governance Model in Public Administration and evaluate which model of HRD Dimension of Governance best fits the Public Administration. The chapter offers vital information for policy, namely social and economic policies, that could be operationalised in social security measures, and training and development regulations. It offers the reader the opportunity to access a number of useful recommendations on how to promote the participation of the workers, and the delegation of responsibilities, in line with the New Public Management principles.

Chapter 3 addresses the overarching question of how creativity can be supported within Swiss apprenticeship training. It provides an assessment on the meaning and value of creative ideas and the role of apprenticeships in supporting creativity. The chapter provides an overview of relevant literature on creativity and its relevance in workforce preparation as well as presents two explorative case studies in the telecommunication and public transport industry in Switzerland, examples for shaping structural conditions in support of creative work.

Chapter 4 examines how self-directed learning effect absorptive capacity by assessing the role of affective trust in colleagues and human capital development climate. The chapter presents findings from 181 participants working in the creative industries sector to evaluate the effects of self-directed learning on absorptive capacity. It seeks to offer the reader an evaluation on how self-directed learning not only has a strong effect on the organisational capability but it also has an impact at the group-level dynamics involving trust and organisational-level climate of our sample of participants.

Chapter 5 presents and assesses the role of professional human resource development practitioners as ‘organisational change consultants’ in addition to their role as ‘training consultants’ and ‘learning consultants’. It discusses the critical change agency role they can and should play in bringing about effective and beneficial organisational change and development in strategic partnership with line managers. The chapter offers the reader the opportunity to explore a compelling rationale for the adoption of evidence-based practice approaches for managing and/or facilitating organisational change and development initiatives. This is essential to support managers and HRD practitioners to lead and/or help facilitate more effective initiatives in the future.

Chapter 6 provides a critical assessment of coaching as a workplace learning and development tool. It highlights the current business demands for workplace creativity and continuous learning and development through the lens of coaching. It explores how coaching closely links with andragogy, reflective, social and transformative learning to emphasise potentials of coaching for workplace learning and development. It seeks to support organisations in fostering creativity in business organisations; more open, flexible and innovative ways of organisational learning should