



The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Human Resource Development

Edited by
Joshua C. Collins
Jamie L. Callahan

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ISBN 978-3-031-10452-7 ISBN 978-3-031-10453-4 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10453-4>

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This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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The Kintsugi Collective is a collective of people working in business schools in the UK, Denmark, and France. The members who have authorship of this chapter include (our members are always listed randomly): Tali Padan, Copenhagen Business School; Tony Wall, Liverpool Business School; Jamie Callahan, Durham University Business School; Sarah Robinson, Rennes School of Business; Maribel Blasco, Copenhagen Business School; Carole Elliott, Sheffield University Management School; and Annemette Kjaergaard, Copenhagen Business School. As a collective, we want to embrace the spirit of kintsugi in work—“ultimately to guide shadows to beauty’s ends.”

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PART I

Introduction



Critical and Social Justice Perspectives in HRD

Joshua C. Collins and Jamie L. Callahan

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed a significantly increased interest in critical and social justice perspectives among students, scholars, and practitioners of Human Resource Development (HRD). We believe that this increased interest has been fueled by a multitude of factors including but not limited to a shift in generational dynamics, movements for social change such as Black Lives Matter and the rights of transgender people, response to the rise of oppressive populist political leaders around the world, and wider recognition of the ways in which the personal and the professional are often interconnected and inseparable.

With this recognition have come many changes in the field of HRD. Most literature addressing critical and social justice perspectives in HRD emerged after Fenwick (2004) challenged the field to be more critical in an issue of *Adult Education Quarterly*. Additional early works were primarily been published in either *Human Resource Development International* (e.g., Callahan, 2007; Fenwick, 2005; Lawless et al., 2012) or the *Journal of European Industrial Training* (e.g., Holden & Griggs, 2010; Trehan & Rigg, 2011). In 2014, an issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources* (Gedro,

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Collins, & Rocco) was dedicated to exploring critical perspectives in the field. This issue has gained great traction since being published, logging hundreds of citations and joining Rigg, Stewart, and Trehan (2007) as a comprehensive foundational critical HRD (CHRD) text.

In 2015, the field ushered in the inaugural granting of the Laura Bierema Excellence in Critical HRD Award given by the Academy of HRD on an annual basis, further increasing the profile of critical perspectives in HRD. In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, sparked global protest against the forces of anti-Blackness and white supremacy, the Academy of HRD took further steps to establish a permanent Antiracism Committee, complete with a policy stipulating ongoing representation on the Board of Directors. Still, there is often a lack of understanding regarding what it “means” to be a CHRD scholar or to maintain a concern for/with social justice in the field of HRD. Byrd (2018) defined social injustice as “the repression of a person’s individual and civil rights which in the process could hinder their capacity to achieve full potential to learn and perform (Byrd 2014a)” (p. 3). Byrd added: “A social injustice can be either an overt or covert act or behaviour that is intended to demean or degrade by calling attention to the person’s social identity, or to emphasize and remind the person of their marginalized location in society” (2018, p. 3). Finally, Byrd (2018) defined social justice as “a democratic, participatory, inclusive process and vision” (pp. 7–8) which demands diversity, equity, and inclusion of all. This handbook fills a need in the discipline of HRD for an expansive text introducing, explaining, and advancing CHRD with an eye toward social justice. This handbook is distinguished by its perspective on HRD that does not prioritize the neoliberal focus primarily on productivity and performance. Instead, CHRD seeks to critique dominant paradigms related to what the field can and should be doing to advance human development.

Critical Human Resource Development aims to challenge the normative structures, practices, policies, definitions, and approaches that have historically dominated the field of HRD. As an approach to HRD, CHRD raises awareness of social systems, organizational policies and practices, and research paradigms that silence new ways of knowing and understanding, while advancing underrepresented and emerging approaches. Through an analysis of power and privilege, morality and ethics, and ideology and context, CHRD situates diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, and resistance as a path forward in a rapidly-changing global society. The purpose of this first-ever *Handbook of Critical Human Resource Development* is to provide an expansive exploration of critical theory, critical perspectives, critical praxis, and the impact on the research, theory, and practice of HRD. To help set the stage in this opening chapter, we begin with the question: “*In whose interest should HRD serve?*” (Callahan, 2007).

IN WHOSE INTEREST SHOULD HRD SERVE?

Within CHRD, stakeholders are generally understood to include “customers, employees, suppliers, and citizens” who actively participate and are affected by “policy development and oversight” within or as a result of an organization (Bierema, 2009, p. 76). Stakeholders may be any person or group of people who will be impacted by an organization’s decisions, actions, vision, or mission. The stakeholder orientation implies the capacity of HRD to impact individuals, organizations, and communities, and it is foundational to advancing critical and social justice perspectives in the field. Whether the impact is planned, unplanned, reactionary, positive, neutral, or negative hinges on an organization’s view of their relationship to and with society. In addition, the stakeholder orientation recognizes HRD’s position as an intermediary between management and employees, but instead of merely favoring the objectives of management, an inclusive stakeholder approach is ideally capable of balancing the desires of multiple stakeholders while also tending to the needs of the most vulnerable. Pursuant to this understanding, the stakeholder orientation stands in direct opposition to the more traditional and dominant “stockholder orientation that is performative, placing value on economics and performance, only considering social responsibility when it is profitable or required by law” (Bierema, 2009, p. 75).

The stockholder orientation draws its strength by depending on capitalistic conceptions of power. These conceptions of power as a zero-sum game can be plainly seen in the prevalence of hierarchical organizational structures, in politics, and even in pop culture. The boss has the final say, one President moves out while another moves in, and the rise of a talented new artist must surely mean the demise or irrelevance of another. And yet, power may also be consolidated. Sometimes, the consolidation of power can lead to more equitable and just outcomes for the collective, such as through labor unions or employee resource groups, and other times, it can lead to furthered entrenchment within exploitative systems, such as through certain mergers and acquisitions which can leave workers displaced, under-supported, or even unemployed.

Han et al. (2017) discussed the historical evolution of HRD in three waves. In the first wave, “defining HRD centered around the distinction of HRD focus on learning or performance” (p. 297). The impacts of this first wave can still be seen in the contemporary study and practice of HRD, through the propagation of such popular concepts as employee engagement. Depending on the perspective a person chooses to take, employee engagement can be about individual learning, development, and growth and how systems either support or discourage that growth and the individual’s well-being, or it can be about maximizing systems and resources to improve and encourage performance to the benefit of the organization. In the second wave, “HRD shifted its primary focus from individuals to the organization” (Han et al, 2017, p. 297). This wave is evidenced by the prominence of and continued interest in such aspects

of HRD as strategic HRD, the idea of the learning organization, and organization development and change, all of which tend to emphasize the importance of the organizational mission, vision, and values over that of the individual. Finally, in the third wave, HRD has seen “the expansion of the postmodern identity, covering human development, ethics, and corporate social responsibility” (Han et al, 2017, p. 298). It is in this wave when critical perspectives became more prominent within HRD, primarily through the introduction of research which explicitly highlighted the importance of individual social identities, as well as individual values, in understanding the experience of work and organizations. To more fully understand the contributions of each of these waves to our overall understanding of HRD as it is now, it is also important to discuss the ways in which the relationship between HRD and organizations has been framed.

Sambrook (2000) described a typology of three types of relationships between HRD and organizations: tell (training and development) in which “organizational strategy is determined by senior managers, following a linear model, and then told, or communicated to other employees” (p. 168), sell (component HRD) in which “the focus is on a component and efficient approach to learning interventions at a tactical level within the organization” which may or may not be “explicitly linked to corporate needs and future requirements” (p. 169), and gel (strategic HRD) in which “the HRD function is concerned with nurturing learning within work activities, encouraging greater individual responsibility and the sharing of learning, and helping line managers create a learning climate, culture or environment” (p. 170). While some may view HRD, with its focus on human development, performance, and learning, as a more naturally critical discipline, traditionally HRD functions as an intermediary between organizations and employees. While HRD processes may seek to develop employees on an individual basis, it is usually in order to serve organizational objectives such as productivity, profitability, and efficiency. Collins and Chlup (2014) stated:

Given that workplaces exist for organizational objectives, such as creating shareholder value and maximizing profits, we recognize that for HRD practitioners there may be a disconnect between supporting and implementing such objectives while also maintaining a social justice [or critical] perspective. (p. 483)

Obviously, HRD’s position as an intermediary between organizations and employees can complicate the work of those who view HRD in a more critical manner. Critical HRD responds to traditions and histories within HRD by emphasizing the importance of treating all organizational stakeholders as fundamental building blocks to organizational success, while also promoting a “whole person” approach that allows for individual development which may or may not directly impact the organization but enhances the overall wellbeing of the employee. It is therefore the responsibility of HRD to serve the interests of everyone who is impacted by what an organization does, or what is done in

a space of organizing, while tending to the needs of the most vulnerable and underrepresented first. Because of this, and as is discussed in many chapters throughout this handbook, many critical theories and perspectives emphasize individual narratives and storytelling as useful tools for disseminating knowledge that challenges or critiques the status quo.

EDITORS' NARRATIVES: WHY ARE WE CRITICAL?

We signed the contract to edit this handbook and invited authors in March 2020. Crafting the first-ever expansive resource for the study of Critical HRD at a time that exactly coincided with a pandemic, challenges with caregiving and schooling, wide-scale economic hardship, contentious political elections, attempts to usurp democratic governmental processes, overt public racial injustices, mass shootings, and the cascading social, physical, emotional, and psychological effects presented many challenges. We lost authors and chapters along the way due to the crushing weight of it all. But we gained other authors and co-authors as we leaned on each other to continue getting the work done. We wish all who were, at any time, involved with this project a heartfelt thank you for your continued dedication to advancing CHR. Relationships and relational skills got this handbook across the finish line despite challenges. As the editors, we are in awe of the ways we have witnessed the power of individual experience and narrative to shape the context of our work over these last two years. In the next section, we present our narratives, as editors, focusing on the principal question: *Why are we critical?*

Joshua's Narrative: Self-Discovery, Validation, and Liberation Through Critical HRD

I entered the field of HRD at a particularly vulnerable moment in my own development and self-discovery. As I was completing my undergraduate studies at Texas A&M University, I had a very loose idea of what I wanted to do. I knew that I had skill sets in verbal and written communication. I had been working as a graphic designer for nearly five years, and I also knew that I did not want to continue with that work but that I was often most engaged with my work when I had the ability to be creative. I had always been interested in corporate life and how business is conducted, particularly how people communicate or cooperate—or do not—across differences in the workplace. These factors drew me to apply to the master's program in HRD at Texas A&M.

As I was leaving my previous job as a graphic designer to begin graduate school, a member of executive leadership asked me to go to lunch as a thank you for my years of service. Of course, I agreed. While at this lunch, among many other topics of conversation, the executive leader expressed to me that he had been surprised I succeeded in the organization for as long as I did because I was “fru fru.” This took me completely off guard for a number

of reasons. First, I felt immediately that it was inappropriate for anybody to say such a thing in any context at any time, let alone at work. Second, the statement clearly alluded to a perception that this executive leader held about my sexual orientation. While the perception was ultimately correct, I was not yet out as gay—not even to myself. This experience shaped the spirit with which I entered my graduate studies in HRD. In entering the field, I hoped I would find ways to help create organizational cultures where no one else would have this kind of experience, and I also sensed that it was time for me to learn more about myself and to find ways to live my truth.

From the beginning of my time in the field, I did not see studying organizational systems and individual experiences as separate areas of interest. My vantage point allowed me to clearly see many of the ways in which systems matter and that individuals interact with systems in particular ways based on who they are. In one of my earliest graduate courses in HRD, the professor (who happens to be my co-editor for this handbook) came into class one evening fired up about an article that had been recently published in one of the HRD journals. The article in question had discussed sex work(ers) in an international context in a manner that the professor and several of her colleagues felt was exploitative and lacked a feminist analysis (Storberg-Walker et al., 2010). She had printed the article out for us to read and to reflect on its implications as it related to the topic of the course (training and development). As I flipped through the article, I was honestly shocked. This was the first moment when I began to see the many ways in which the field of HRD lacked critical voices. My assumption had been that HRD would be a field that would be leading in the space of diversity, equity, inclusion, and treating people with dignity and respect. What I saw at this moment was how much work remained to be done.

As I began to read the work of the few critical scholars at that time—people such as Laura Bierema, Tonette Rocco, and many of the other scholars whose work appears or is cited in this handbook—I started to realize that this was where I could make a difference, at first primarily around lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) issues which were vastly understudied in the field. I began taking graduate courses in women's and gender studies as well, to better inform my perspectives and my learning. Today, I would say I am critical because once my eyes were opened to injustices faced by those who do not hold the same privileges that I do, I could not unsee those injustices and would not wish to. Seeing the deep unfairness that seemed to seep from society, to communities, and into organizations did not sit well with me, but I was still simultaneously working through my own development.

One summer, I had the opportunity to take a course about women in education with Mary Alfred. I believe there were about 20 students in the course. At the time, I was the only student who identified as a man. The course felt like a safe space to use academic research and theory as a way to interrogate my own identity in a way that eventually led me to come out as gay a couple months later. The course offered me the opportunity, in a safe

environment, to intellectualize being gay. I became comfortable with being gay, as a concept, through theory. Reading about the LGBTQ+ community and the experiences of other gay men and lesbians helped me to see myself more clearly. It was validating. I was able to say the words to myself for the first time, and once I did that, coming out came naturally. Coming out and being out became a reality of my life that had been derived directly from my academic experience in HRD and which liberated me from my conservative Christian roots which told me—nearly every single day growing up—that I would never be happy. As I moved through my doctoral studies at Florida International University, my first faculty position at the University of Arkansas, promotion and tenure at the University of Minnesota, and as I presently navigate being a mid-career academic with influence in the field, these foundational experiences have stayed with me and informed the ways that I approach my work, my research, mentorship, and leadership. As a cisgender white gay man, I know that my privileges have been as influential over my experiences as the marginality I have faced. I have always hoped that HRD can become a field that can encourage and sustain human flourishing, both inside and outside of organizations, no matter what differences we may have. I believe CHRD is a body of research and practice which can help us to achieve this objective.

Jamie's Narrative: Moving from Disrupted to Disrupter Through Critical HRD

I was introduced to the field of HRD through my military service when I got involved with Total Quality Air Force, back in the day of Total Quality Management (TQM). They needed somebody to teach about TQM in the context of the Air Force, so I got involved in training and eventually became a certified Air Force instructor. Being an instructor gave me the opportunity to share and engage in a way that I really enjoyed. I started to think about what it meant to learn and develop at work, so when I had the opportunity to exit the Air Force and work toward a doctorate and what I assumed would be a career in consulting, I took it.

At George Washington University, my introduction to the field of HRD was, at the time, rather performative in nature. Of course, the performance paradigm aligned well with my military background and views at the time. My initial understandings of learning, development, and performance assumed that everyone had the same opportunities for growth and advancement and that those who did not were simply making a choice. I had a professor early on in adult learning who helped to challenge this viewpoint by highlighting the ways in which societal inequities and injustices are designed and sustained in such a way that can make it difficult for those without access and resources. My professor told me about some of her research in the Appalachian mountains, talking to women who shared experiences such as being forced to leave school in the sixth grade because that was simply when girls left school, being sexually assaulted by family members, and being kept from reading or watching

television. Many of the women my professor had talked to in her research had no idea that there was a world out there or that there were additional opportunities because they were never exposed to it.

This experience disrupted many of the values and viewpoints I had taken for granted up to that point. I saw plainly how influential the availability of resources and opportunities are to a person's ability to learn and develop. It stuck with me. Nevertheless, at the time I went through graduate school, the field of HRD was still almost exclusively dominated by the performance paradigm. It was not until I went to Texas A&M University as a faculty member that I started working with Jenny Sandlin and Ralf St Clair, who asked me to write a chapter in their *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education* monograph focused on how critical perspectives are very frequently not enacted into praxis. They asked me to write about emotion in the classroom because they saw me teaching in critical ways. I had not yet made that connection for myself because I had not heard the language. I had never read Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Jenny and Ralf introduced me to these ideas by asking me to write the chapter, which shifted the way that I thought about critical perspectives and their applications in HRD.

From there, I realized that my critical perspective had always been present. As I learned and developed the language to better articulate this perspective, I had many opportunities to become a leader and voice within the movement toward CHRD. Reflecting on how far the field has come, I know that there is still a long way to go. I now believe that we are at a very important juncture as we determine the future of the field. Peoples' voices are getting louder, and I think that people are less and less willing to be complicit with the powers that reinforce oppressive and exploitative structures that we live and work in. We are developing greater understandings of power, equity, equality, and diversity, so I have to be hopeful—the alternative is unthinkable.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF CRITICAL HRD

Like many in HRD, our initial introduction to and training in the field oriented us to understand the scope and outcomes of HRD research and practice primarily across three “pillars” or areas of focus: organization development (OD), training and development (TD), and career development (CD). As we have developed our identities as CHRD scholars, these pillars have become less accurate to fully encompass a more equitable and justice-oriented vision of the field. We also explicitly acknowledge the long history of Adult Education's contributions to HRD's capacity to advance critical and social justice perspectives. The relationship between Adult Education and HRD is an issue that continues to be a part of conversations in both fields. Cunningham (2004) and Hatcher and Bowles (2013, 2014) suggested that critical and social justice perspectives may be the bridge the two fields need to encourage

greater collaboration and understanding. In this handbook, we have encouraged authors—who identify as scholars of management, Adult Education, HRD, and other disciplines—to adopt a more critical and cross-disciplinary vantage point that classifies the scope and outcomes of HRD across five domains identified by CHRD scholars as key to understanding the nature and work of the field—organizing, relating, learning, changing (Bierema & Callahan, 2014), and advocating (Collins et al., 2015). Drawing from these perspectives, this handbook explores each of these five domains as follows:

- We seek to “explore the space of *organizing*,” (Bierema & Callahan, 2014, p. 440) shifting focus away from organizations in the traditional sense toward a more inclusive perspective that more fully encompasses all the spaces, places, and contexts where HRD does or could occur.
- We seek to explore the ways in which *relating* communicates how “HRD is grounded in relationships between people,” (Bierema & Callahan, 2014, p. 437) and we believe this grounding to be central to effectively encouraging and facilitating the development of people and greater social and organizational justice.
- We seek to explore the “different types of *learning*, different places of learning, different philosophies of learning, [and] different purposes of learning” (Bierema & Callahan, 2014, p. 438) which inform, influence, and shape development and performance in spaces of organizing.
- We seek to explore *changing* in spaces of organizing, including “the ethical implications of implementing [change]” (Bierema & Callahan, 2014, p. 439), while drawing a distinction between inclusive change and change which creates and perpetuates exclusion.
- We seek to explore *advocating*, or “relating, learning, changing, and organizing on behalf of others,” (Collins et al., 2015, p. 218) as a core conviction and skillset of those who engage or wish to engage in CHRD research and practice.

ORGANIZATION OF THE *HANDBOOK OF CRITICAL HRD*

To guide our exploration of these five domains, this handbook is structured across three sections: Recontextualizing, Reconceptualizing, and Reconnecting. The chapters in the section focused on Recontextualizing lay a foundation of critical theory and practice which aid in understanding how critical perspectives both align with and diverge from traditional approaches in the field. In this section, a group of international authors explores the contexts, principles, spaces, agreements, collaborations, and understandings that situate the importance of viewing the scholarship and practice of HRD from alternative viewpoints. This section is intended to help even a novice to the field better understand and see themselves or their experiences through the lens of critical and social justice perspectives.

The chapters in the section focused on Reconceptualizing further this important work by reimagining commonly understood components of HRD theory and practice in a more critical manner. In this section, the authors work to reimagine an HRD that integrates critical thinking and critical perspectives throughout its operations, to place human thriving at the center of HRD's agenda, and to present alternative ways of thinking about concepts such as leadership, mentorship, inclusion, and learning in the field.

Finally, the chapters in the section focused on Reconnecting aim to remind us of CHRDR's roots in theories and concepts which were derived to provide a better understanding of identity, intersectionality, and the interplay between individuals, communities, organizations, and society. In this section, authors explore HRD through the vantage point of individual identity, while centering that conversation first and foremost on what the field can and should do for those from more vulnerable and underrepresented groups in spaces of organizing. This section argues in favor of a responsible and socially just HRD and offers suggestions for a future where this vision can be achieved.

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PART II

Recontextualizing