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ABSTRACT
       This symposium on career development issues consists of
three presentations. "Career Development: What Is Its Role in Human Resource
Development (HRD)?" (Mary Allyn Boudreaux) explores the role of career
development theory and research in the field of HRD. Definitions of HRD are
provided, and the status of career theory and research and its application to
HRD are examined. "Free Agent Learners: The New Career Model and Its Impact
on HRD" (Darren Short, Rose Opengart) reports these findings of qualitative
research aimed at exploring the free agent concept and these implications for
HRD: free agents operating outside of knowledge industries, the importance of
learning to free agents, career support for employees, and HRD shifting its
focus from training towards learning. "Career Development Through Informal
Learning: A Review of the Literature" (Toni Powell, Betty Hubschman,
Madeleine Doran) presents a review of recent studies pointing to the
disappearance of career development in contemporary organizations. Other
studies included in this review suggest that the need for the career
development function still exists. It presents a model that links the HRD
practitioner to a re-formed career development function through informal
learning and concludes with several suggestions for future research. All
three papers include substantial bibliographies. (YLB)

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Career Development: What is its Role in Human Resource Development?

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This paper explores the role of career development theory and research in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD). Definitions of HRD and career development are provided and the status of career theory and research and its application to HRD are examined.

Keywords: Career Theory, Career Development, Human Resource Development

In its development as a profession, human resource development (HRD) has drawn upon the fields of psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, education and communication as well as economics and management science to build a body of knowledge and expertise and a base for research. Over the last twenty years, HRD professionals have refined their roles within organizations and have moved from a field that was defined by practice to one based upon both theory and practice (Jacobs, 2000).

Since Nadler in 1968 first coined the term HRD (Chalofsky, 1992) many scholars have attempted to precisely define the roles and responsibilities of the HRD profession. In a review of eighteen definitions of human resource development, Weinberger (1998) identified career development as a key component in four of those definitions. This paper will examine the status of career theory and research and the role of career development in human resource development.

Human Resource Development and Career Development Defined

Definitions of HRD

The 1989 Models for HRD Practice reported the results of a competency study sponsored by the American Society of Training and Development. In this report, HRD was defined as: "the integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness" (McLagan, 1989, as cited in Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, p. 3). Watkins (1991) defined HRD as a "field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group, and organizational levels. As such it includes – but is not limited to – training, career development, and organization development" (p. 253). In Weinberger's 1998 review of definitions of HRD, two more definitions included career development as an element of HRD. Marquardt and Engel's 1993 definition included the provision of career counseling as a skill needed in HRD and Marsick and Watkins in 1994 defined HRD "as a combination of training, career development, and organizational development" (as cited in Weinberger, 1998, p. 79).

In recent years, Swanson (1999) has defined HRD and its core process as follows:

HRD is a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance at the organizational, process and individual/group levels. The process of HRD is made up of five core phases including: analyse, propose, create, implement and assess (p. 2-3).

This definition retains the use of training and organization development as a means for developing employee potential and improving performance, but omits career development as a core process. Swanson (2000) does include career development as one of the three critical related areas of HRD. The others are human resource management and quality improvement.

Five key underlying theories are now associated with HRD: learning theory, performance improvement theory, systems theory, economic theory and psychological theory (Weinberger, 1998). The many roles of practitioners have included, but are not limited to trainer, instructional designer, administrator, career advisor, internal consultant, educator, organization development specialist and purveyor of services (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992; Mafi, 2000). In 1986, Ralphs and Stephan reported the results of a study of HRD departments in Fortune 500 companies. The top four activities that were considered a function of HRD were: training and development, career development, human resource planning, and organization development, (Ralphs & Stephan, 1986).

Definition of Career Development

A career is a sequence of work experiences and personal changes that take place over the course of an individual's life (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989; Bailyn, 1989; Hall, 1971). Careers are the means by which an individual's attributes are brought together with the environment where work takes place, the organization (Bailyn, 1989; Ornstein & Isabella, 1993). Career development focuses on the alignment of individual subjective career aspects and the more objective career aspects of the organization in order to achieve the best fit between individual and organizational needs as well as personal characteristics and career roles (Hall, 1971; McDougal & Vaughan, 1996; Rothwell & Sredl, 1992).

Leibowitz, Farren and Kaye (1986) define the career development system as the "organized, formalized, planned effort to achieve a balance between the individual's career needs and the organization's work-force requirements" (p. 4). Career development programs help to ensure that needed skills are available within the organization and improve the organization's "ability to attract and retain highly talented people" (Morrall, 1998, p. 83). The career development system when integrated with human resource structures, offer a variety of opportunities for development and can "form the link between current performance and future development" (Leibowitz et al., 1986, p. 5). To be successful, career development should be linked to business strategy and have executive support (Gutteridge, Leibowitz & Shore, 1993). The individual and organization share responsibility for the career development process.

Two approaches to career development are career planning and career management. Career planning is an individual level approach and is the mechanism by which people explore their selves and career opportunities (Hall, 1986). The individual assesses his/her interests, skills and values in order to consider their options, make career choices and set career goals (Leibowitz et al., 1986). Career planning activities include self-directed workbooks, self-assessment testing and career counseling and career-planning workshops. Organizations are responsible for providing the tools for this self-assessment and for providing opportunities for training, education and development (Leibowitz et al., 1986).

Career management on the other hand is an organizational level approach that involves the process of strategic human resource planning and the organization's career system (Hall, 1986). Career management programs address the human resource needs of the organization while taking into account individual career plans. Management development programs, organizational career paths or ladders and succession planning are all examples of career management practices.

Career Theory and Research

Like human resource development, career theory and career development are applied fields rooted in multiple disciplines. The career concept has been influenced by work in psychology, sociology, anthropology, counseling psychology, industrial psychology, economics, human resources, organizational behavior and theory and the management sciences (Arthur et al., 1989; Leibowitz et al., 1986; Ornstein & Isabella, 1993). The foundation for career development activity is rooted in adult development, career choice and development, learning and organization theories (Leibowitz et al., 1986).

Dominant Career Theories and Their Application to HRD

Four theories that dominate career thinking and research (Brown & Brooks, 1996; Brown, 1996; Osipow, 1990) are also applicable to HRD. Osipow (1990) states that their dominance may be due to either their "empirical base and operational utility or because their ideas have widespread appeal" (p. 123). Either way, these theories can provide insight into individual employees as well as the prediction of congruence between the personality and the occupation of an individual. They are the trait-oriented theories of John Holland and Rene Dawis, the developmental theory of Donald Super, and John Krumboltz' learning theory.

Trait-Oriented Theory. Holland's trait-oriented theory is perhaps the "most widely used theory in organizational career development programs" (Leibowitz et al., 1986, p. 80). The model, which classifies six personality types and their relation to the work environment, seeks to match individuals with a congruent environment for increased job satisfaction and longevity (Muchinsky, 1999; Osipow, 1990; Spokane, 1996). How personality types influence satisfaction, tenure and achievement and how environments influence personality, satisfaction, tenure and achievement provide insight into organizational behavior and provide a framework for practice (Brown, 1996; Muchinsky, 1999; Rayman & Atanasoff, 1999).

Although it is predominantly a model of career selection, Holland's theory has been used to explain person-organization fit. This "concept of fit has transcended the topic of vocational interests, and is now the dominant model which underlies theories of organizational behavior" (Muchinsky, 1999, p. 128). The goal of person-organization fit is deemed appropriate by HRD scholars and is a core belief about people (Ruona, 2000). Holland's theory can be used by organizations in selection and placement of employees, in the creation of teams, and to select individuals for training and job enrichment activities.

Holland's theory, along with Dawis' work adjustment theory, is considered the best-developed and most influential model when "both practice and research are considered as the sole criteria for judging theory" (Brown, 1996, p. 524).

Work Adjustment Theory. The work adjustment theory is also a trait-oriented theory. It is a process model that describes how the work personality develops and how that personality is affected within the work environment (Dawis, 1996; Osipow, 1990). When a worker's personality and environment are congruent, both the worker and the organization are satisfied. When they are not congruent, active and reactive adjustments are made (Dawis, 1996). Work adjustment theory has been shown to be useful in the prediction of worker satisfaction and work satisfactoriness, the prediction of persistence, stability and productivity at work, and in the prediction of job tenure (Dawis, 1996; Osipow, 1990). It is used in career planning and work adjustment counseling as well as by organizations to study the adjustment of adults to change in the work environment (Holton in press) and to plan for subsequent development activities.

Developmental Theory. Super first introduced his developmental theory in 1953 and since that time it has been used as the basis for numerous studies (Brown & Brooks 1996; Brown, 1996). The strength of this theory is in its career growth stages that take place over an individual's lifespan and the designation of the life-space dimension, which depicts individual life-roles (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Over a person's lifetime they adjust to work by accomplishing developmental life tasks throughout five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. Underlying these stages are the multiple social roles individuals fill. These include the roles of child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker and homemaker.

There are questions about the comprehensiveness of this theory and its applicability to women and minority cultures (Dalton, 1989; Schein, 1986). However, Super's ideas about values, career maturity and life-role interaction are very influential in career development (Brown, 1996) and can be useful in HRD practice. Individuals move through life's developmental tasks and adjust to changing roles in home and work life. Knowledge of the developmental stages of an individual's work life and an awareness of the changing needs of adult employees are beneficial in the design of learning experiences and training as well as organizational development interventions (Holton in press).

Social Learning Theory. Introduced by Krumboltz in 1979, social learning theory emphasizes the interaction of people with their environment (Osipow, 1990). It is posed that certain factors such as genetics, innate abilities, environmental conditions, life events, and learning experiences influence the individual's approach to work tasks and career paths (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). As a result of these influences people form beliefs about their own reality. This theory has much in common with the theory of andragogy, which emphasizes the impact of individual differences and life experience on learning (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998). When used in conjunction with the principles of andragogy, social learning theory can be a powerful tool for the HRD practitioner, especially when used in the context of education and training design. Traditional uses for social learning theory include career counseling and career education and research about individuals.

Shortcomings of Career and Career Development Theory

Career theories provide insight into the relationship of the individual to work. However career development theory has been overlooked by HRD (Holton in press). Very little literature is published about the similarities of career development, training and organizational development fields even though they are all based on organizational change models and systems thinking (Russell, 1991). For example, of the career literature reviewed in the <u>Career Development Quarterly</u> for the years 1995-1998 (Niles, 1997; Stoltz-Loike, 1996; Swanson & Parcover, 1998; Young & Chen, 1999), only three articles had appeared in one of the top five HRD literature sources (Sleezer & Sleezer, 1997).

Much of current career theory and research is focused on career choice and occupational selection as well as Super's early stages of career development: career exploration and establishment. Reviews of over 800 career research articles and books revealed most of what is found in the career literature is related to individual assessment and counseling and not the individual's progression through their career nor on changes in the organizational context (Niles, 1997; Stoltz-Loike, 1996; Swanson & Parcover, 1998; Young & Chen, 1999). In 1998, only 26 of the 259 publications reviewed related to organizations (Young & Chen, 1999) and, in 1997, only 40 of the 180 publications reviewed considered organizational and workplace issues (Swanson & Parcover, 1998). There is little career research that evaluates the effectiveness of organizational career programs (Russell, 1991).

When research is directed to careers within organizations the focus is most often on the effect of the organization on individual careers rather than the effects of careers on organizations (Nystrom & McArthur, 1989). This attention to the individual and the early career stages of career exploration and decision-making leaves many questions unanswered (Swanson, 1992). Career research and practice has not been linked to performance. Career planning programs provide individual benefits but are not "based on business performance requirements" (Torraco & Swanson, 1995, p. 17).

Career research has assumed a stable environment and traditional careers (Sullivan, 1992). We know that this is no longer the norm in the workplace. Much of what is seen in the literature is applicable to the traditional concept of careers and career progression. Career theory depicts "development as a vertical, hierarchical process and the career as a linear, age-related progression that is assumed to occur within stable organization or occupational settings" (Fletcher, 1996, p. 109). However, this notion of the traditional career seems to be the exception instead of the rule in today's world.

Hall and Mirvis (1996) suggest that because of changes in the work environment, career progression should be viewed as a cyclical process of learning and mastery rather than progression through a set of stages. Kram (1996) agrees. She asserts that within a turbulent and diverse work context developmental career models are "less effective in understanding, predicting, and responding to a particular individual's career concerns" (p. 136). With increased emphasis on alternative career paths for individuals and less hierarchical more flattened organizations, traditional theories of career development may no longer be relevant (Hall, 1986; Mirvis & Hall, 1996).

Trends such as the increased number of women and minorities in the workplace, the middle-aging of the workforce, the global economy and a distributed workforce must also be considered when evaluating career theory and research (Jarratt & Coates, 1995). Dalton (1989) questions whether life-span models of career development are relevant for women's patterns of entering and leaving the workforce. Schein (1986) also worries that "much of our career research is culturally biased" (p. 315). In a global economy, issues of multiculturalism and international careers move to the forefront.

From Theory to Practice

Career development practices benefit the organization in several ways. In a tight labor market, development practices are critical 'for generating loyalty among high potential employees' (Morrall, 1998, p. 56). Other benefits of a career development system for the organization include: reduced turnover, better communication, equal opportunities for women and minorities, increased motivation of employees, improved maintenance of employee skills and increased effectiveness of human resource systems and procedures (Leibowitz et al., 1986; Simonsen, 1997).

HRD professionals are concerned with improving organizational, process and individual performance as well as individual and organizational learning. They use tools such as assessment and training and evaluation to accomplish that goal. Similarly, "career development planning includes needs assessment, to determine appropriate training and development activities, and measurement, to determine whether any learning took place" (Simonsen, 1997, p. 61). Hall (1996c) proposes several activities that can improve career development practice that parallel the roles and practices of HRD and include the roles of organizational interventionist; promoter of learning through work; promoter of continuous learning through job mobility. Activities include providing information about careers and services and the promotion of work planning activities that involve finding a good fit between the individual and work that is needed.

Scholars and practitioners should think of careers in "terms of skill development, initiative, and personal freedom" (Mirvis & Hall, 1996, p.72) and should endorse training initiatives that promote lifelong learning. McLagan (1997) identified a learning competency as necessary for performance of the people practices within an organization. The components of this learning competency are personal career development, along with individual development, team development, education and training, coaching and mentoring.

Career development practices are considered by scholars to be a desirable role or competency of HRD practitioners (McLagan, 1996, 1997; Morrall, 1998). The role of individual development and career consultant, is listed as one of nine roles to be performed by HRD practitioners and includes the responsibility for assisting employees in the evaluation of their values, competencies and goals and in the formulation and implementation of personal development plans (McLagan, 1996).

Morrall (1998) suggested that professional and career development can be important components within rightsizing models of HRD. He recommends the strategic use of professional and career development to determine training needs and to ensure needed skills are available within the organization. Career development theory, especially work adjustment theory and developmental theory, can provide a lens to study the effects of change on the individual in an organization (Holton in press).

Whether or not an organization has individual employees with the capacity and expertise to perform their jobs is of concern in both HRD and career development practice (Swanson, 1994). These factors have importance at all levels of the organization and have to do with organizational leadership and human knowledge capital as well as the individual capabilities of its employees. Selection, placement, training and skills assessment practices are related to evaluation of the expertise available within the organization. To ensure the satisfactory performance of these practices, Simonsen (1997) recommends the alignment of career development processes with the strategic business needs of the organization and organizational systems.

Finally, Gutteridge et al. (1993) recommend several strategies to enhance organizational career development processes. Many of these strategies should be enacted through a partnership with organizational HRD efforts. These include: linking development planning and strategic planning; linking career development with human resource systems; train managers to be effective career coaches; develop and implement peer-learning and team-based developmental activities; identify and develop transferable competencies; accommodate learning styles and other special needs of employees; link career development to quality initiatives; and expand career development measurement and evaluation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For career theory to play a role in HRD, researchers and scholars must build upon past and present thinking to address several issues. First, the study of careers cannot end with an individual's entry into an organization nor can it end with the study of an individual's career progression (Dalton, 1989). To be of use to the HRD field "issues such as productivity, the identification and implementation of new skills, the impact of the atrophy of old skills (including obsolescence), work stress, and coping, and how environmental variables interact with worker attributes over time must be appropriately addressed" (Osipow, 1990, p. 130).

A theory of careers that takes a holistic view of the individual and "encompasses all spheres of activity and all corresponding facets of personal identity" is needed (Hall, 1996b, p. 7). Research that is related to how individuals "learn from work experience" and whether or not they can "learn how to learn"' (Hall, 1996c, pp. 333-334) would be useful in continuous learning initiatives.

Career theories must take into account the dynamic nature of careers and the "occupational, organizational, or task requirements of the work entailed in that career" (Bailyn, 1989, p. 485). Future research should take into account protean careers (those driven by the individual, not the organization) and the new career contract where the individual seeks psychological success, continuous learning and opportunities for development instead of recognition and promotion (Hall, 1996a). As alternative career paths, job rotation, lateral and downward moves and the use of cross-functional teams, become more common, and as careers progress through multiple cycles instead of an hierarchical progression, scholars will need further research on the values placed on intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards as well as the value of psychological success (Hall, 1986; Mirvis & Hall, 1996).

Future research should delve into boundarlyess careers and the employee transitions between occupational and organizational boundaries as well as among work roles. Ornstein and Isabella (1993) recommend a research agenda that includes the attraction of individuals to an organization, their socialization into those organizations, the adjustments, life issues and organizational conditions facing individuals and the commitment of the individual and the organization to the work. Sullivan (1999) adds to this agenda with five major recommendations:

- Examine effect of employment relationships on individual and organizational outcomes.
- Examine the effectiveness of organizational programs and new learning methods for skill development.
- Examine the career experiences of women and minorities.
- Examine the technology's impact on careers
- Examine the cross-cultural aspects of career research.

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Career research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of career development interventions as well as on the usefulness of career theory in HRD applications. Career concepts must be linked more closely to organizational strategy, performance management and performance outcomes (Simonsen, 1997). Watkins (1991) suggests that human resource developers "seek ways to expand the scope of their role to include many pathways to learning and organizational effectiveness" (p. 253).

These research propositions, if acted upon, could increase the body of knowledge related to careers today. It would also be of great benefit to HRD practitioners and the study of organizational behavior and performance. To be useful, research will need to reflect the "rapidly changing, fast learning, and complex" (Hall, 1996c, p. 333) organizations being studied and provide results that are useful to not only the academic world but to these organizations and the practitioners being studied.

Career development theory and practice offers a means to expand the role of HRD and to help to meet HRD goals. Career development can and should play a role in HRD.

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Free Agent Learners: The New Career Model and its Impact on HRD

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> *Changes in the job market are affecting how employees view their current positions and careers. More employees (so-called 'free agents') are developing portfolio careers. They focus on securing their long-term employability through continually enhancing and expanding their expertise, knowledge-base, reputation, and networks. It has been claimed that this is influencing how employees view and approach their workplace learning. This paper reports the findings of qualitative research aimed at exploring the free agent concept and the implications for HRD.*

Keywords: Free Agents, Free Agent Learners, New Career Model

The term *free agent* is applied to employees who focus on their long-term employability security within the new career model (Kanter, 1995), without seeing themselves as bound to any one organization (Packer, 2000). They manage their own careers, moving to those jobs and organizations that offer them the opportunities for growth they need to maintain their employability (Packer, 2000). Given their attention on expertise and growth, workplace learning is important for free agents who look for opportunities to learn and apply that learning (Caudron, 1999). What then are the implications for HRD functions in organizations?

The Research-to-Practice Committee of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) recently explored the impact of free agents on training through a series of three articles published in *Training and Development* (Packer, 2000; Short & Opengart, 2000; Martineau & Cartwright, 2000). The series was designed to explore free agents and training with reference to existing research, and in doing so highlighted how little has been published in the HRD press on the impact of free agents on the profession (with the exception of Caudron, 1999, and Marsick, et al., 2000). If the authors of the three article are correct in their assertions, then:

- Organizations are likely to need to use learning as a means of attracting and retaining free agents (Packer, 2000),
- HRD functions will need to take a broader perspective on learning to supplement the traditional focus on training (Short & Opengart, 2000),
- HRD functions will need to operate as a partner with other organizational systems in the design and delivery of actions to attract and retain free agents (Short & Opengart, 2000).

Because of the lack of research to date, there is little published evidence to either support or disprove these assertions. The purpose of the qualitative research study described in this paper was to fill some of that research gap by exploring free agents in organizations and their influence on HRD functions. By gaining a better understanding of these influences, it is hoped that HRD functions can adapt their services to meet the needs of free agents and organizations, and in doing so can support individuals as they maintain employability security and support the organization in retaining key employees.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study was framed using existing literature on free agents, which was written mainly by academics from business schools (Deal & Kennedy, 1999; Kanter, 1995) and authors who focused on the training practitioner audience (Caudron, 1999; Packer, 2000). That literature is summarized in this section.

Many employees are changing their views of careers, partly in reaction to downsizing, outsourcing, e-commerce, mergers, and other organizational changes (Deal & Kennedy, 1999). Together with shifting

demographics, rising educational levels, and increasing numbers of dual career couples or families (Hoff, 2000), these factors are creating a new kind of career. Whereas employees once saw certain careers as allowing them to stay in a single organization for life, careers are ceasing to consist of such long-term employment with one employer (Kanter, 1995). Instead, they are being formed from a series of jobs with different employers, with professionals more likely to consider themselves as having a career within their profession and employees as being employed in the industry rather than by the organization (Saxenian, 1996).

Initially, these changes to careers were experienced in knowledge-based industries, such as software, telecommunications technology, multimedia, biotechnology, and health technology. However, there are signs of them spreading to organizations in other sectors (Wooldridge, 2000). There is also evidence that the new career model is being supported by newcomers to the workforce, who enter with a different attitude towards careers than their older generations (Chalofsky, 2000).

As employees experience greater uncertainty in their careers, they shift their attention from employment security to employability security (Gould & Levin, 1998; Wooldridge, 2000), which implies the need for changes in how employees approach their career, career management, and career-enhancing activities (Kanter, 1995). From the perspective of individual employees, success will come to those who know themselves – their strengths and values, how they best perform, where they belong, and what they should contribute (Drucker, 1999); and to those who update and expand their expertise, knowledge and skills, who build and maintain networks, and who increase and display reputations (Short & Opengart, 2000). Employees therefore need to increase their learning capability, which requires having the necessary intelligence, high self-esteem and self-efficacy, being open to new experiences, having a need for achievement, and believing they can change (Van Velsor & Guthrie, 1999). Employees will also need career self-management skills (Hoff, 2000), including feedback-seeking skills and job movement preparedness (Kosseck, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998).

The shift to employability security results in a fundamental change in what employees expect from their employers, and how employers should think about their responsibilities and obligations (Kanter, 1995). From the organization's perspective, potential as well as current employees' focus on employability will require that organizations consider learning as a lever for attracting and retaining skilled employees (Packer, 2000). As free agents focus on developing a portfolio of assets and a collection of value-adding skills (Gould & Levin, 1998), they will offer those assets to organizations, who in turn will benefit from increased competitiveness. The free agents will expect something in return for their diligent efforts: that their employers offer opportunities for growth through learning and the application of that learning (Caudron, 1999). Where growth is limited and employability threatened, employees may seek out alternative organizations that offer the desired incentives and structures around learning. Organizations that fail to deliver the desired learning and growth therefore risk losing key employees and becoming less competitive (Packer, 2000).

Employees' focus on employability security and career portfolios has led them to be likened to free agents in professional sports (Kanter, 1995). Like their sporting counterparts, free agents in organizations are not bound to any team or franchise (Packer, 2000). Given the central role that workplace learning plays in building employability, some authors have described free agents in learning mode as free agent learners (Caudron, 1999; Marsick, et al, 2000; Packer, 2000). Free agent learners look to employers to offer opportunities for growth through learning and the application of that learning. Caudron (1999) described them as independent, highly motivated adults who take responsibility for their own learning and development, utilize their spare time to learn, use new approaches to learning, and self-teach using a variety of resources. These employees are more selective and independent in the training they receive.

Caudron's (1999) statements about the free agent learner approach to learning led Short and Opengart (2000) to describe how HRD functions can support organizations as they seek to attract and retain free agents. They claimed that adapting would require that HRD functions to see training as just one means of employee learning, to operate in partnership with other organizational systems and functions to attract and retain high quality employees, and to change the role of trainers towards that of learning champions, advisers, and counselors. However, there is little research-based evidence to either support or disprove those claims.

Research Design

A qualitative study was designed to explore:
- Whether, and if so how, employee attitudes towards careers have changed and are changing;

- Whether, and if so how, employees' attitudes toward learning are influenced by a focus on long-term employability;
- Organizational and HRD responses to free agents.

The study used a convenience sample of eleven organizations in the United States (seven), United Kingdom (three), and Brazil (one), with organizations selected because the researchers had access to senior HRD managers, or could arrange access through a third party. The organizations were also selected to cover a range of sectors, organization sizes, and locations, although five of the eleven organizations were banks (two in the United States, two in the United Kingdom, and one in Brazil). That emphasis on banks was included to allow for a comparison between organizations in the same economic sector but different locations (the result of that analysis is being submitted to another conference). The other organizations included a university (US), an environmental consulting firm (US), an electronics manufacturer (US), an energy company (US), a central government department (UK), and a professional association (US). The number of employees per organization ranged from 215 to 110,000.

Information was collected through semi-structured interviews either via telephone or face-to-face. In one case, information was collected via e-mail using the main questions used during interviews. The interview questions focused on four main areas:

- *Careers*: how organizations and employees have changed their view of careers over the past five years; any evidence to support claims that employees are thinking in terms of career portfolios and employability security, and particular types of employees who have changed their approaches to careers.
- *Employability*: how organizations attract and retain employees focused on employability (including support provided on career self-management), and steps organizations take to tackle retention problems.
- *Learning*: steps employees take to enhance long-term employability and the importance of learning; evidence to support claims that free agents focus on developing expertise, networks, and reputations, and how organizations use learning to attract and retain free agents.
- *Role of HRD*: the impact of free agents on HRD functions; how HRD functions are meeting free agents' needs for employability-focused learning and support for self-managed careers; how HRD is working with other functions/systems to support the organization in attracting and retaining free agents, and the impact of free agents on the trainer's role.

In each case, interviewees were senior training managers, HRD directors, or vice-presidents. Interviews were audio recorded and transcripts produced. Basic data analysis overlapped with data collection to allow researchers the opportunity to adjust the interview protocol where necessary and to allow emerging themes to be explored in later interviews. Data analyses were completed within-cases and between-cases. Within-case analysis was based on typed transcripts of all interviews, allowing researchers to become intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity. Patterns emerging from each organization were compared against those coming from the other organizations and classified using the four broad research issues described above.

Limitations of the research result from selection and interview methods. Participants were chosen because of their availability and willingness. Interview method, whether by phone, in person, or e-mail, differed depending on geographical location. In order to overcome these limitations, the authors maintained anonymity to encourage full communication and applied the same question format across organizations.

Findings

Employee Attitudes Towards Careers

Nine of the eleven organizations reported how some of their employees were changing their approach to careers in the direction of free agency; that is towards an increased focus on long-term employability. Both exceptions were located in the United Kingdom (one public sector organization and one bank) and both reported very high employee retention rates (98 per cent per annum in one case). With these high retention rates, employees were reported as still thinking in terms of careers within the organization. For the public sector organization, the interviewee claimed that the concept of portfolio careers did not seem to apply, except for high potential employees.

The other organizations in the study all reported changes to employees' views of careers, with interviewees, for example, describing how employees no longer view their organizations as providing a job for life, and that it is increasingly difficult to retain skilled specialists. As interviewees described, "employees are increasingly skeptical and cynical following a series of downsizing and continuing threats to job security," and "employees now focus less on job security and more on employability, and will look elsewhere if they need to – the phrase 'portfolio of skills'

describes exactly what these employees are trying to develop." Elsewhere, one senior training manager at a US bank described how, "the bank is realistic about careers – it is a long-lost dream that employees will be with the bank forever;" an equivalent at another US bank described how the organization now "thinks in terms of career development rather than career paths."

Despite the reported change in employees' views, those changes were experienced differently by each organization with not all employees being are focused on employability. For one organization, the majority of employees were described as thinking in terms of a portfolio of skills and maintaining employability security; but for another "only ten percent of employees could be described as free agents." Most interviewees reported that free agent behaviors existed and were most common among specialists such as engineering and human resources, information systems staff, and e-business experts. Such employees tended to be young, in an identifiable profession, and recognized as having high potential.

Link Between Employability and Learning

The interviews produced a range of evidence to suggest certain employees are focused on using learning and development as a means of maintaining employability, with accounts of why employees left organizations proving a useful source. For example, "several years ago, one hundred high tech employees left one of the organizations on the same day because they considered the organization was lacking in that area." Elsewhere, interviewees reported that employees left for a variety of reasons including: to work on important projects, to continue learning, to open up new job opportunities, and to apply their learning where such opportunities do not exist in their current organization. Two interviewees specifically mentioned the problem of not having sufficient opportunities for employees to use their organization-sponsored MBAs, and that consequently the organizations had difficulty retaining such employees. The importance of learning was frequently stressed relative to money, which was mentioned only rarely: "only a small proportion of employees leave because of money. Most leave to advance their careers by seeking a broader range of tasks and experiences and breadth of skills." Another interviewee described how, "High potential employees are less concerned about money and more concerned about development, recognition, and visibility."

There is also evidence that many of the employees who choose to remain with organizations are also focused on maintaining their employability through learning and development. For example, interviewees described how: "employees seek opportunities to learn as a means of opening up new job opportunities;" "more senior employees focus on developing new skills and broadening their experience to make themselves more marketable to other organizations;" and "younger staff working in technological positions seek continuous development opportunities as a means of keeping their skills up-to-date and marketable to this organization as well as others." Where those opportunities are made available to employees, that appears to increase the likelihood of retention; however, as one interviewee described, "there is evidence of a threshold, where employees look inside the organization until they become frustrated, and then they look outside."

Specific comments were made about high potential employees and their concern for development, recognition, and visibility, and about IT employees for whom "training is everything, it is their careers. They want to be prepared for the next set of products. Training is their life-line: it's how they earn their money."

Organizational Attitudes and Responses to Employability

All interviewees described how their organizations were supporting employee skills and career development, whether turnover rates were high or not. One interviewee argued that to "not provide such activities would lead employees to perceive that the organization does not value their contribution, is not helping them with their careers, and is not contributing to their growth."

The two organizations with the lowest turnover rates were among the organizations most active in career development. One of those two talked in terms of building internal employability by helping employees to design their own development programs using access to a wide variety of learning opportunities. The other organization employed career development counselors and was introducing a career development center to assist employees in identifying learning needs relative to career aspirations.

Organizations are taking the following steps linked to career development:
- Career advice: mentoring programs and career development discussions between employees and managers to identify the skills and knowledge needed to enhance careers. Several interviewees stated that their managers

would not necessarily give career advice covering options outside of their organization, but that the practice varied between managers.

- Career support: training courses and other learning resources on career self-management. One organization uses a career development process available to all employees to help them manage their career using self-assessment tools and advice on skills development, career trends, and networking. Other interviewees described the use of software packages for career development and 360-degree feedback programs to assist employees in identifying career development needs.
- Internal-job markets: three interviewees claimed that retention rates were assisted in part by the wide range of jobs available to employees, to the advertising around the organization of all vacancies, and to the application processes that made it easy for employees to apply for vacant positions and move within the organization.

Three groups of employees were frequently singled out for special treatment by the organizations studied:

- High potential employees: several of the organizations run special programs for their high potential employees. One bank (with around six thousand employees) ran a program for sixty employees it was "keen to retain," although the program is being wound down and some of those employees are threatening to leave, claiming that the program was the main reason they stayed at the organization. Another organization (with around eleven thousand employees) runs a four-year program with around forty employees entering each year; the program involves access to special training courses, high profile work projects and assignments, and dedicated career advice. Despite those programs, several organizations reported that high potential employees were among one of the groups with the lowest retention rates – one interviewee reported that, "high potentials are the employees we most want to retain, and we invest a lot of money in them, but they are not necessarily looking for a career with us, which causes us problems."
- High tech employees: most organizations reported that high tech employees were the most difficult to retain and the most likely to have an employability focus. One interviewee described how the "IT community is absolutely cosseted at the bank – they are the employee group most looked after by the bank." In that case, high tech employees get regular pay reviews and have any concerns dealt with quickly; although according to the interviewee, high tech employees working on cutting edge projects were the least likely to leave because of the strong developmental nature of the work.
- Employees identified as being 'at risk' of leaving: three organizations were described as paying special attention to 'at risk' employees. One of them, a bank, identifies high potential and 'at risk' employees through their HR systems, and then analyzes their reasons for wanting to leave before assessing whether those reasons can be addressed. Another organization identifies 'at risk' employees in middle- to senior-leadership grades, particularly where they have business-critical skills or for diversity issues, with the intention of addressing their reasons for wanting to leave.

No single organization used all of the above approaches as part of their strategy to attract and retain free agents, although a few organizations did use many of them. Where one organization was still looking at introducing approaches, the interviewee claimed that they had been too slow to react and that key employees had left, perceiving greater opportunities elsewhere. As the interviewee described, "we reacted too slowly to demands for increased development through job rotation, job breadth, and working on different projects... the organization's systems have not yet caught up with the reality of employees' career needs."

An interview at another organization indicated that the steps they are taking will not only support retention but also the attraction of potential employees: "our new development programs will show structure, career paths, and show how the organization will provide the training potential employees need." Interviews therefore demonstrated the changing organizational attitudes in attempting to provide developmental opportunities required for employability.

Roles of Learning and HRD in Employee Retention

Interviewees were invited to describe how organizations were using learning to assist employees as they build and maintain their employability. The actions reported included:
- Career-focused skills training, such as providing training in e-business skills to allow employees to compete against external applicants for new and changing jobs.
- Off-the-job development: access to external training programs, tuition reimbursement for educational classes, opportunities for foreign conferences, and special executive programs.

- Moving key employees to "sexy positions" where they work on cutting-edge projects, have easier access to senior leaders, and receive greater visibility; and encouraging managers and HR to take a more flexible approach to job design.
- Giving employees greater control over their own learning, in part by allowing them to design their own learning programs in consultation with their managers, and providing employees with access to a wider range of on and off-the-job learning opportunities.
- Using the full range of media to advise employees of available learning and development opportunities, to provide guidance on networking as a source of development, and make greater use of technology as a means of delivery (particularly intranets).
- Providing greater access to subject-matter experts; "employees want access to experts. It does not bother them whether the experts are internal or external but they must be credible in the eyes of the employees." For one organization, the move to using experts involved making greater use of internal leaders as the deliverers of training.
- Allowing employees to spend developmental periods working at non-competing organizations.
- Linking development programs to performance management and rewards systems.
- Introducing executive development coaches for all senior managers, and mentors for other staff (using senior managers to mentor junior ones).
- Placing greater emphasis on new entrant development, helping them to build an internal network and plan their next career move within the organization (both aimed at increasing retention rates).
- Increasing expenditure on training and tuition reimbursement.

As this list suggests, the interviewees provided evidence of a shift in HRD attention away from training and towards learning and careers. As one interviewee described, "there has been a shift away from employees automatically thinking of training as a learning solution," and another talked of, "HRD becoming the manager of learning and development." At one organization, there has been a clear move towards employee-controlled learning; the view being that the less HRD delivers, the more freed up it is to offer advice on development opportunities, and identify how it can use learning to help the organization move in the direction it needs or wants to go. There, HRD has become the manager of learning and of development. At a second organization, there is more use of non-training learning activities, more courses on career self-management, and career advice provided through the HRD function. A third organization with thirty-five thousand employees has introduced six internal learning consultants who advise team leaders and HR staff on how to invest resources in learning. Their attention is increasingly more development focused. A fourth organization has introduced career development counselors, who offer advice on improving performance, gaining access to needed development opportunities, and improving approaches to getting other jobs.

However, some interviewees stressed a concern that too great of a focus on meeting employee learning needs will draw attention away from business needs. In the case of one bank, around 75 percent of training is for immediate application and not for longer-term development. That organization requires justification for learning and can require that the employee cover the costs of some learning. In addition, the organization is looking to put "handcuffs on certain employees who receive funded training and education in order to prevent them from leaving the organization soon afterwards." An interviewee from another bank also stressed that the business case drives learning activities, and mentioned that the bank is concerned about developing employees if there is no immediate opportunity to apply that learning.

Interviews also identified evidence that HRD is working more with other organizational functions and systems to tackle employee retention issues. As one interviewee stated, "there is an increasing acknowledgement that training is only part of the solution to both retention and performance, and there has been a move towards a more systemic approach to learning and organization development." Examples were identified of where HRD has recently become more active with linking leadership development to succession planning, developed closer links between training course content and competencies used for performance management and in career development centers, introduced new entrant development programs to encourage employee retention, and worked with knowledge management functions to advertise expertise across organizations.

Conclusion

This research largely supported the literature, providing evidence that many, although not all, employees are changing their views of careers and are focusing on employability security. In addition, this research identified some points to supplement existing writing on free agents and highlighted how organizations, and in particular HRD

functions, are changing to meet the career and learning needs of free agents. To explore four of the main findings further:

Free agents operating outside of knowledge industries. Previous research stated that the new career model existed predominantly in the software and knowledge industries. This research identified free agents operating in the finance, university, consulting, manufacturing, utilities, and professional association sectors. The research also identified two additional groups of free agent employees: high potential employees (a group not found in existing free agent literature); and younger employees, regardless of their field of work.

The importance of learning to free agents. The research provided evidence to support claims of a link between learning and employability. Where interviewees described employees focused on employability security, they tended to also describe how those employees paid particular attention to their learning and development and list ways in which the organization was adapting to provide the learning and development opportunities being sought. It was not clear from the research whether those steps to alter organizations' approaches to learning would have happened anyway, regardless of the emergence of the free agent in the workplace (for example, one organization had a strong learning orientation despite its 98 percent retention rate).

Career support for employees. The research provided evidence that more organizations are now providing career support to employees, even where the organization does not consider itself as offering a lifetime career to its employees. There is a greater emphasis on providing employees with career self-management support, whether in the form of career counselors, career management training courses, career development centers, access to career analysis software, and so on. Although some of the organizations spoke to HR having responsibility for such career activities, others specifically mentioned the role of HRD, suggesting that HRD functions may be using employees' increased attention on employability as a reason for moving into the career development arena in organizations.

HRD shifting its focus from training towards learning. Most HRD functions appear to be supplementing their traditional focus on training with a broader perspective on learning. That shift is opening up new areas of activity for HRD functions as employees take more responsibility for their own learning, leaving HRD to take on the strategic role on organizational and individual learning. Increased emphasis on using experts rather than general trainers, multiple delivery media for learning, and the movement of key employees into development positions were all mentioned as influencing the role of HRD.

Contribution to HRD

The research reported in this paper only involved a small sample, however the findings do hint at a number of changes across a variety of economic sectors on three continents. Three changes mentioned in the last section were: the spread of free agents across sectors; the increased attention organizations are giving to career support for employees; and HRD functions supplementing a traditional focus on training with a broader perspective on learning. It is not clear from the research whether these three changes are influenced by each other. However, if they are connected, then any further changes to employees' career attitudes are likely to impact HRD functions in terms of an increased role in career support for employees and an increased role for HRD in using learning, development, and growth opportunities as a means of attracting and retaining free agent employees. This research therefore appears to provide some support for the claims made by Short and Opengart (2000) that an increased spread of free agents would require HRD functions to alter their focus of attention, partner with other organizational systems in support of employee attraction and retention, and alter the role of trainers towards that of learning champion and advisor.

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Career Development through Informal Learning: A Review of the Literature

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> *This paper presents a review of recent studies pointing to the disappearance of career development in contemporary organizations. Other studies included in this review suggest that the need for the career development function still exists. The authors present a model which links the HRD practitioner to a re-formed career development function through informal learning. The authors conclude with several suggestions for future research.*

Keywords: Career Development, Informal Learning, Workplace Learning

Recently, we have seen a number of studies indicating that the roles and tasks of HRD practitioners have shifted considerably since McLagan's Models for Excellence study (1989) was published. HRD practitioners are more likely to be described as performance analysts rather than trainers; they join consulting firms which contract in outsourcing rather than work in large corporations as full-time employees; they assist managers in mentoring and coaching their workers rather than serve as instructors, mentors or coaches themselves. Clearly, the role and scope of the human resource development field has undergone some dramatic changes during the past twenty years.

Another role traditionally associated with HRD is that of career development specialist. This role appears to have disappeared almost entirely. In fact, career development programs have undergone such tremendous change that they, too, appear to have disappeared. Is the function of career development gone? If not, where is it, who is facilitating it, and what is its purpose? Technological change and the economic uncertainty prevalent in the current global workplace have clearly impacted the focus of traditional career development programs. Researchers in economics, employment counseling, and public administration have addressed the change in career development and concluded that what was once career development for employees is now career development for organizations (Watts, 2000; Clark, 1992; Feild and Harris, 1991; Schmidt, 1994). Rather than emphasizing the advancement of employees' careers, studies indicate that this function now focuses on the management of a few carefully selected employees' careers for the advancement of the organization. As organizations cut costs, downsized, and developed flatter organizational structures, most employee-focused programs and services have been either drastically reduced or cut entirely. Currently, organizations focus on their own goals rather than on supporting the career goals of their employees. Highly sought-after managers with high potential who are designated for rapid advancement to top executive positions are, in many organizations, the only employee group targeted for fast-track career development programs (Cox and Cooper, 1988).

Clearly, studies on the shift and status of career development, though too few, do exist. What is missing, however, is research focusing on the impact of this shift on HRD. In a study investigating changes in roles and competencies in the HRD field since the Models for Excellence Study (1989), Powell and Hubschman (1999) found that their sample of HRD professionals, when asked to list competencies and roles most important for them in their careers, ranked career development techniques quite low. This finding was supported by earlier studies (Dare and Leach, 1998; Rothwell, 1996, Mager, 1996), suggesting that career development is not an important or even viable role for HRD practitioners today. Why not? If HRD practitioners do not envision that their roles include assisting employees in the struggle to promote themselves or prepare for a new position in a new company, who does? Employers are no longer taking any responsibility for developing employees unless doing so clearly meets organizational objectives. Employees, who have always been expected to initiate their career development strategies, must now take full responsibility for managing them. However, many individuals who are currently searching for upward mobility, better wages and more satisfying work, have indicated that the tremendous growth of change and instability in the work place has impacted their health and energy (Feller, 1991). London and Bray (1983) found that younger managers were distinctly less interested in leadership or advancement than were managers of thirty years ago due, in part, to work stress and the heavy time

demands placed on them. Ironically, it appears that at a time when most employees are given complete responsibility for their own career advancement, they may need more assistance than ever before.

In reviewing the literature on the current status of career development in organizations, the authors of this paper make two assumptions:

- HRD practitioners are the most appropriate and qualified group of professionals to implement career development programs and services for today's corporate employees;
- The most effective means for doing this is through the use of informal learning principles and tools.

To facilitate this literature review, the authors of this paper examined learning models that conceptualized the use of informal learning techniques such as coaching, mentoring, and other team and site-based tools often found in learning organizations (Marsick and Watkins, 1990) which could be used to assist employees in their career development goals. The rationale for the use of informal learning models, rather than more formal instructional methods and materials, is consistent with the research supporting the trends toward self-directed and team learning which emerge from learning organizations (Maharry, 1998; Marsick and Watkins, 1990). However, in order for HRD practitioners to justify a re-focusing of their energies and skills on career development, support must exist from the findings of research studies that indicate that informal learning techniques could assist employees in their own career planning. Research in the use of informal learning models for career development would help to (1) categorize the style of learning engaged in by career development-focused individuals, (2) re-define the role of HRD practitioner as mentor and coach, as well as instructor, and (3) define appropriate methods that can be used to motivate and encourage employees who are struggling to advance in an increasingly turbulent work environment. Theories describing career development and the informal learning process have assisted in explaining how each of these processes emerge. These theories and models can direct research and practice. The review of the literature addresses the following research question: Do current theories of career development and informal learning provide us with a framework by which to address the career development needs of employees in the 21st century?

This paper reviews the literature framing the theories of career development and informal learning. The purpose of this review is to determine the extent to which HRD practitioners could adopt informal learning techniques currently used in organizations to meet the career development needs of employees. In order to serve this purpose, the authors analyze bodies of literature from organizational learning theory, career development theory, and informal learning theory. In addition, the authors discuss some themes emerging from transcripts of interviews held with human resource administrators at corporate and non-profit organizations. It is our intention to use these themes to support or question some of the conclusions from the literature and provide some focus on our discussion and recommendations for future research.

Criteria and Sources

We selected the review literature from ABI/Inform, PsychLit, Electric Library, and ProQuest, with particular emphasis on journal articles and texts published since 1996. Upon further reflection, we included pertinent literature published prior to 1996 to serve as a background for the premises and findings of the later studies. All of the research studies included in the literature review were published in refereed journals, with one exception. We began our search of the databases with terms including workplace learning, career development, training, independent learner, informal learning, learning styles, management development, management learning, and human resource management. We ultimately focused on three key areas: career development, informal learning, and workplace learning. We reviewed 44 references. Of these, we selected 28 that addressed our research question.

Review of the Literature

Merriam and Simpson (1995) propose that the purpose of a literature review is to summarize previous work on a topic and then make suggestions for future research. Utilizing this framework, the authors of this paper review the literature's findings on the current status of career development in U.S. companies and its impact on employee developmental needs, review current theories and studies on the role of informal learning in organizations, provide a foundation for investigating the use of informal learning in providing for employees' developmental needs, and, finally, suggest how HRD practitioners could serve as facilitators in using informal learning techniques to meet employee's developmental needs.

Current Status of Career Development

In the current work environment, organizations offer workers few employment contracts resulting in long-term commitments (Knowdell, 1999). When the pyramid structure was in place, promotions served as the vehicle to shift an ambitious employee up the traditional ladder; today, however, for most employees, there is no ladder to climb. As further illustration of this situation, the authors of this paper conducted four interviews with profit and not-for-profit organizations in the southeastern United States. All respondents indicated that their career development programs were offered primarily to employees being groomed for top leadership positions or to support employees who were being prepared to assist in professional fields where critical shortages exist, such as nursing and nursing support positions. The respondents also indicated that career development is linked to an employee's annual performance review. In other words, employees must first show that they are performing effectively in order to qualify for career development opportunities.

To be effective, employees must be given information to perform their jobs adequately. To advance in an organization, however, employees must be given much more comprehensive and deeper knowledge about the total system and how they, as workers, fit into overall system objectives. For example, in the re-engineering team environment, employees commit to (1) the process to be re-engineered, (2) the customers the process serves and (3) the team itself. To this end, the employee should no longer feel loyalty to the former department or boss and should not be expected to return to the former assignment. Without a real understanding of the re-engineering environment, however, employees may see little chance for advancement, leading to a greater dissatisfaction and turnover (Hammer, 1995). There is evidence that employee dissatisfaction with career advancement is not a new phenomenon. When consultants for Fortune 500 companies surveyed employees and their managers, the greatest discrepancies between perceptions of managers and subordinates lay in questions relating to career opportunities; employees clearly felt that their managers were not helpful in planning their career opportunities, giving them timely and honest feedback and coaching them on performance (Bradford and Cohen, 1984). In a more recent bank study, Antonacopoulou (1999), who recently completed a three-year longitudinal study of the three largest banks in the UK, found that while all three banks had career development mechanisms in place, only one of the three promoted individual learning Additionally, many of the respondents in the study indicated that there was a close link between rankings on their performance evaluations and the extent to which they engaged in developmental activities. These findings highlight the dilemma of reconciling individual and organizational learning needs.

Informal Learning

Informal learning techniques have been advocated for adult learners for some time. Malcolm Knowles (1980) whose theory of andragogy advocates that adult learners are motivated by an environment that encourages them to be independent and self-directed learners, suggested that learning should convey a "spirit of mutuality between teachers and students" (p.47). More recently, Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998) and Mailick and Stumpf (1998) affirm that experiential learning is more effective than passive learning for integrating new learning and research studies which have investigated the use of experiential learning to enhance transfer of learning into performance support these hypotheses (Holton, Bates, Seyler & Carvalho, 1997). Currently, with the organizational community facing reorganization, downsizing and the constant evolving of job descriptions and roles, formal learning, implemented usually through training classes and workshops, is diminishing; informal learning has become the mindset. The results of a study completed two years ago (Maharry, 1998), indicate that perhaps as much as 70 percent of employees' learning needs are fulfilled through informal learning. The study also found that informal learning is most effective in teams, in casual meetings and in contact with customers. Bechtold (2000) acknowledges the convenience of informal learning experiences such as on-the-job coaching or a team meeting. "Informal learning also occurs when group members share their individual knowledge and experiences with each other in the hallway or when groups come together to fix a customer issue" (p.12). Sisakht (1999) suggests informal learning mechanisms such as the cognitive apprenticeship, which is an on-the-job learning experience where the learner is assigned to an expert who assists in the development of complex cognitive skills; mentoring, which can include orienting the mentee to the sociopolitical aspects of the organization or coaching for job related tasks; and internships, which can extend learning internally by providing opportunities for work in other departments or divisions.

In addition to being more convenient and accessible, informal learning can be powerful. Beckett (2000) distinguishes between traditional, classroom training which offers propositional knowledge, or 'knowing that x' and

tacit knowledge or 'knowing how x' (Ryle, 1949). This kind of knowledge refers to learning through and at workplace experiences (Beckett, 2000), and assumes the idea of 'whole person' or organic workplace learning. Through this kind of learning, employees not only acquire cognitive and psychomotor skills but social and affective skills, at well. Organic, or whole person learning impacts and is impacted on by others since employees are part of a complex network of relationships. Obviously, this level of meaning results not only in employee growth, or team growth, but organizational growth as well. Beckett suggests several structures which encourage organic learning: mentoring, which enhances interpersonal skills such as problem-solving, communicability, and team membership; project management, which develops conflict resolution, task analysis and time management; and competence, which enhances the employee's professional expertise. Torraco's (1999) study on changes in how workplace performance is learned supports the importance of tacit, or organic learning. "The distinction between learning and working has significantly eroded in today's workplace. Skilled performance in the work roles described would not have developed if workers had not had the benefit of learning in the context of their work" (p. 255).

Can Informal Learning Restore Career Development?

The idea that informal and incidental learning could be adopted to serve individual career development needs has been proposed before. Bechtold (2000) points to the "social interaction and network of connections" (p. 13) which supports most informal learning activities. In fact, activities such as team meetings, on-the-job coaching sessions, "lessons learned" sessions, or even casual get-togethers in the employee cafeteria are productive to the extent that skills in dialogue, reflective listening, time management, facilitation and train-the-trainer are developed and enhanced. The importance of acquiring skills such as these is obvious; what may be more interesting is that these skills are acquired through learning-by-doing-from-using knowledge (Bechtold, 2000). When we learn with others by doing and then reflect on this experience, we develop shared meanings. This process allows for enhanced interpersonal skills and, to accompany that, enhanced esteem and confidence. We suggest that this is the type of individual employee learning which leads to organizational learning. As an added factor, this type of learning can, ultimately, lead to career advancement for individual employees.

Bechtold (2000) recommends using the development professional as the most likely practitioner to facilitate the employee's journey from "conceptual to systemic to operational to shared tacit knowledge" (p. 16). For example, trainers can easily adapt classroom teaching skills for team meetings or project sessions, introducing concepts in time management or goal-setting. As another example, instructional designers could coach team leaders in preparing lessons plans for teaching new technical information to team members. The objective would not be to instruct employees, an objective linked to formal learning efforts. Rather, the intent would be twofold: (1) to generate a culture that nurtures organizational learning, and (2) to assist employees in transforming their knowledge, learned informally through shared meanings, into career advancement.
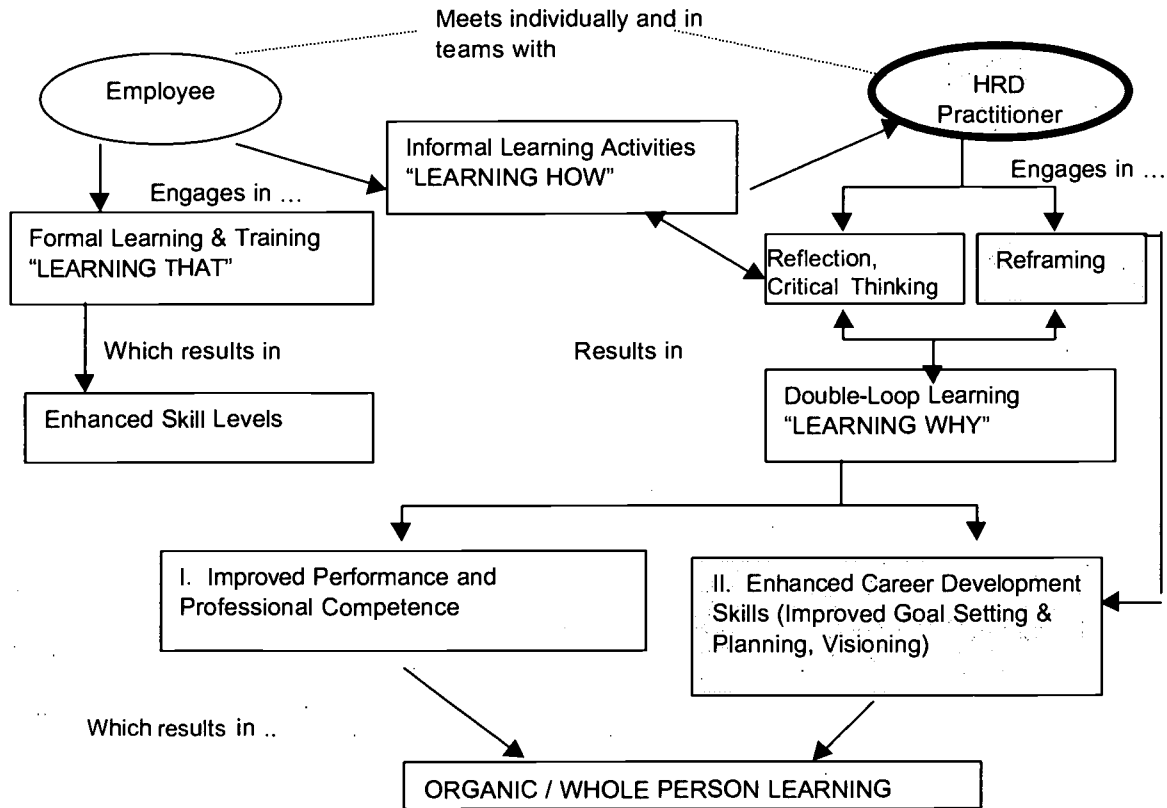
Watkins and Marsick (1997) cite the need to move away from the rigid behavioral definitions of the roles of Human Resource Developers as identified in the ASTD competency study (McLagan, 1989) and the need for a broader, conception of Human Resource Development that embraces informal and incidental learning. HRD practitioners will facilitate individual learning activities by enabling individuals to be more effective continuous learners, facilitating team learning and overcoming barriers to collective learning. This conceptual change will require the career developer to reflect upon the traditional definition of success and teach employees to think systematically and learn from experience. It also requires a significantly more strategic role working with corporate boards to provide incentives for employees to be continually renewed and challenged.

Garrison, cited in Merriam and Cafferella (1999) proposes a self-directed learning model that allows learners to take control and shape the conditions of learning to reach their stated goals and objectives. This process would allow learners to become "self-monitoring", or able to think about their thinking, similar to reflective or critical thinking. In Garrison's model, learning would take place through a process which includes self-management, or self-control, and self-monitoring, or responsibility. We envision a similar process with an added component: the HRD practitioner as a catalyst who would assist the learner in shifting their 'learning that x' to 'learning how x' (Ryle, 1949) and then, on an even more profound level, to 'learning why x' (Beckett,2000). The 'learning why x', or analytic learning, which we envision emerging particularly through the reframing process, is the most meaningful level of learning in the sense that it includes cognitive knowledge and ownership of tasks and abilities, but allows understanding and appreciation for appropriate affective workplace learning. The employee would be able to demonstrate competence in cognitive, social, and affective dimensions of workplace life. The result for the employee is whole or organic learning (Beckett, 2000).

After reviewing the literature on current career development practices, organizational and informal learning theories, we offer a model which demonstrates how these theories can serve as a framework by which future researchers can pursue two lines of inquiry: (1) the present and future performance needs of employees and (2) the enhancement of a key role for HRD practitioners.

Figure 1. Re-Creation of Career Development via Informal Learning

In the model, the link between the employee and the HRD practitioner is found in the "LEARNING HOW" activities, during which employees engage in reflection, critical thinking and reframing. These are activities that require a facilitator such as an HRD practitioner who is skilled in process activities and who can then assist the employee to shift to a more intense level of learning, "LEARNING WHY". At this level, individuals learn to integrate the original learning experience into both professional and personal aspects of their lives. The literature suggests that at the LEARNING WHY level, individuals can claim ownership to more than the cognitive and psychomotor skills acquired through engaging in the learning activity, or to even more than the social and affective skills acquired through their enhanced understanding of the system and how relationships form in the system. At the LEARNING WHY level, employees acquire greater self-efficacy and self-respect, allowing them to engage in greater risk-taking and experimenting. At this level, individuals are capable of assuming greater responsibilities and more difficult tasks, resulting in significantly improved performance. At the same time, employees are also more prepared to set more difficult and ambitious career and professional goals. Regardless of the direction taken, the result for the employee can be a more fully functioning, more complete human being.

The literature strongly encourages the use of informal learning techniques to improve organizational learning. For organizations to learn, Bechtold (2000) suggests, employees must acquire a deeper level of learning, one that

includes, in addition to knowledge acquisition and sharing, the more difficult and profound levels of knowledge generation and application. Bechtold (2000) urges organizations to select professionals who would coach employees in developing the skills and knowledge acquired through informal learning techniques into a broader framework, allowing them to generalize their learning; He also recommends the use of reflection as a means for deepening their learning. The literature suggests that development professionals be used as the channel, or filter, moving the learner from the specific to the general, the superficial to the profound (Beckhard, 2000; Beckett, 2000) We encourage future researchers to investigate how this process could be used, simultaneously, to improve employee performance and re-create the career development function.

Implications for HRD Theory and Practice

Merriam & Simpson (1995) define the purpose of a literature review as "a means of conceptualizing, justifying, implementing, and interpreting a research investigation" (p.33). With this purpose in mind, we suggest that this literature review indicates the need for additional research to determine the extent to which there are links between informal learning techniques, career development, and the HRD practitioner-as-reflector and filter. Both HRD scholars and practitioners know of the close link, historically between the HRD field and the career development function. We believe that this literature review suggests that this link should not be broken. We conclude this paper with some areas we envision future researchers investigating.

Research Areas for Future Investigators

The implications for research linking career developments models for 21st century organizations with informal learning mechanisms and HRD practitioners are boundless. We include some of the more promising areas below:

- Whether present-day HRD practitioners are willing to facilitate the career development function, and, if so...

- What additional skills they must acquire to serve in that role

- How the processes of reflecting, critical thinking, and reframing are defined by HRD practitioners and the type of activities they perceive as appropriate and effective for enhancing these processes in employees

- The financial implications for implementing this model, or other models, in the workplace.

- The extent to which evidence supports or refutes the use of double-loop learning mechanisms to enhance employee performance.

Summary

The authors of this paper have reviewed the literature on the current status of career development in U.S. companies and its impact on employee development needs. Current theories and studies on the rule of informal learning in organizations, along with interviews of Human Resource executives, have led to the development of a proposed model – a re-creation of career development via informal learning – in which the HRD practitioner is the filter or catalyst who assists, through the reframing process, employees in enhancing their career development skills in improved goal setting and visioning, resulting in whole person learning for the employee and enhanced performance for the organization.

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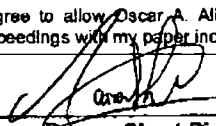ONLY ONE AUTHOR IS REQUIRED TO SIGN THE FORM.**

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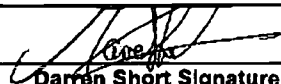| **Office Phone**	44 207 5336335	**Office Fax**	44 207 5336343
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