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ABSTRACT

This document contains three papers from a symposium on the future of human resource development (HRD) and trends in HRD. "Searching for the Future of Human Resource Development" (Wendy E.A. Ruona, Susan A. Lynham, Tom Chermack) reports on a survey of 55 HRD and HRD-related practitioners and academics that examined trends in the HRD profession, identified variables and challenges that are likely to affect the profession in the coming 15-20 years, and documented HRD professionals' concerns regarding HRD's role, identity, credibility, value, and impact in the changing workplace. "The Dynamics of the HRD Profession in the Netherlands" (Wim J. Nijhof) compares the findings of surveys of the HRD profession in the Netherlands that were conducted in 1993 and 1999 and concludes that, in the Netherlands, the HRD profession remains largely defined as a classical or typical type of trainer. "Current HRD Trends in the Netherlands: Conceptualization and Practices" (Kitty Kwakman, Beatrice van der Heijden, Jan Streumer, Ida Wognum, Simone van Zolingen) examines HRD developments outside working organizations, inside working organizations, and within the domain of HRD and demonstrates that not all developments within the HRD domain are of equal importance within specific organizations in the same time period. All three papers include substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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HRD Future and Trends

Symposium 12

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Searching for the Future of Human Resource Development

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This research reports on surveys of 55 HRD and HRD-related practitioners and academics and identifies trends, variables, and challenges that are affecting and will affect the profession during the next 15-20 years. The results show that those surveyed are most concerned with HRD's role, identity, credibiity, value, and impact in the changing workplace of tomorrow.

Keywords: Future of HRD, Trends, Profession

Lyndon B. Johnson once said, "yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose" (Cook, 1993). There is great wisdom to be revealed in that sage statement, especially for the profession of Human Resource Development (HRD). HRD is nearing a crossroads. A relatively young profession, a "teenager" if you will, compared to other professions, HRD is increasingly under pressure to legitimize and differentiate itself (Ruona, 2000). This is true in organizations where professionals scrap for recognition and resources, in journals where concepts, research, and emerging theories are increasingly scrutinized for rigor and contribution to a durable and distinct knowledgebase, and in countless other places and contexts where HRD professionals are trying to make a difference in the critical interface where learning, performance, and the workplace converge.

The profession has made great progress, and yet much of its foundation is quite fragile. Like most people today, especially teenagers, the profession is facing an uncertain future with increased pressure to be clear about who it is now and to equip itself for the frontier that lies ahead. A key competency for young people today is to be very adept at sensing and adapting to future trends, and so it is also with professions. To thrive tomorrow, HRD must earnestly contemplate the future and ready itself. The profession of HRD must consciously scope and plan for the future. One way to do that is to begin to identify and dialogue about assumptions and concerns underlying HRD's strategic thinking and vision and the variables that will fundamentally affect the profession during the next 15-20 years.

The importance of considering the future has increasingly come to light for HRD professionals, however the few available pieces about the future of the profession have been exploratory or theoretical in nature (Swanson, Lynham, Ruona, & Provo, 1998; McLagan, 1999; Streumer, Van der Klink & Van de Brink, 1999). In the spirit of continuing and furthering the dialogue about the future of HRD, this study has drawn from and attempted to build upon previous inquiries into the future of the profession. As has been the case with other professions such as psychology, economics, management, and political science, HRD professionals can expect a lengthy dialogue and building tensions as the profession and its leaders seek to solidify their foundations.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is situated in the context of scenario planning. Scenario planning is a process of positing several alternative future environments based on data and imagination, in which decisions about the future may be played out for the purpose of recognizing current forces and their plausible future implications (Porter, 1985; Schwartz, 1991; Ringland, 1998; Shoemaker, 1995). Scenario planning emerged in business and industry over 30 years ago (see Chermack, Lynham & Ruona, in press, for more detailed historical review) and has steadily grown to be a primary tool to enhance traditional strategic planning processes. Van der Heijden (1997) asserts that scenario planning ultimately seeks to integrate three paradigms of strategic thinking: the rationalist, the evolutionary, and the processural. Each of these paradigms carries its own sets of assumptions which together help to explain the complex reality of strategy making. However, scenario planning most heartily aligns itself with the processural paradigm which emphasizes individual and organizational learning. Van der Heijden (1997) conceptualizes the strategy development process as a learning process modeling Kolb's (1984) theory of learning which consists of four phases:

concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of abstract conceptualization, and testing new implications in new situations.

There are many descriptions of how to do scenario planning in the literature. The Centre for Innovative Leadership (1995) identifies the following six steps, which mirror many of the methodologies available publicly today. These are:

1. Identification of a strategic organizational agenda, including assumptions and concerns about strategic thinking and vision.
2. Challenging of existing assumptions of organizational decision makers by questioning current mental models about the external environment.
3. Systematically examining the organizations external environment to improve understanding of the structure of key forces driving change.
4. Synthesis of information about possible future events into three or four alternative plots or story lines about possible futures.
5. Development of narratives to make the stories relevant and compelling to decision makers.
6. Use of stories to help decision makers "re-view" their strategic thinking.

One of the first steps of any scenario planning process is to elicit the strategic insights of the client. These include tacit and explicit ideas of what is strategically important, what drives (or should drive) the success of the organization, and concerns and anxieties about the future, etc... (van der Heijden, 1997). It is imperative to begin with the clients' view to frame any resulting scenarios in a way that can have optimal impact. This research project begins to address this first step by eliciting the views of people who are actively creating and shaping the HRD profession in order to begin to outline a potential strategic agenda for HRD.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions, thoughts, and concerns about the future of HRD from those who are actively working in and with the profession. The study queried HRD practitioners and academics, as well as those directly and indirectly involved with HRD, about trends, variables, and challenges that are affecting and will likely affect the profession during the next 15-20 years. The guiding research questions for this study were:

- What future trends might affect the profession of HRD?
- What risks might challenge the future effectiveness of the HRD profession?

This study will provide data to help HRD professionals begin to answer critical questions that will help to improve their own strategic thinking as well as the strategic viability of the profession.

Methodology

This paper presents integrated findings from two separate open-ended question surveys. Each of these surveys is described below, including a discussion of how each set of data was gathered and analyzed.

Survey #1

A survey was administered by these authors via e-mail bewteen March-April, 2001. Participants were asked to answer 10 open-ended questions. These questions were created based on van der Heijden's (1997) reccomendations for individual interviews (pg. 146-148) and participants were asked to asess the health of the profession by addressing such things as the surprises and challenges the profession had or had not endured, if and how the profession had grown, and its distinctive competitive advantage in 2015. Participants were also asked 5 demographical questions. Reminders were sent to participants approximately three weeks after the initial survey was sent in order to enhance the response rate.

The participants solicited were randomly chosen from a pool comprised of 40 volunteer members of two organizations. That is, each potential participant was either currently serving as: (1) a member of the Research-to-Practice Committee of the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) or (2) a member of the Board of Directors or a Chair of a committee of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD). This sampling criterion was chosen because these entities are key associations in the field and the members of these committees are either elected or nominated by their membership. The participant pool was male and female participants from diverse professional backgrounds and varied in age from 26-65 years.

Fourteen people responded to this survey for a response rate of 35%. Although this response rate is less than ideal from a quantitative research perspective, it is somewhat understandable because of its entirely open-ended

nature. The results of this survey have thus been combined with survey #2 (described below) and seek only to provide an initial outline of themes emerging from these open-ended questions.

Survey #2

A seperate survey was conducted by the ASTD Research-to-Practice Committee and the Academy of Human Resource Development in preparation for a Future Search Conference (Weisbord & Janoff, 1999) they sponsored in June, 2001. That conference brought together 70 individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectves to focus on the emerging roles of HRD over the next fifteen years. As a part of pre-work for that conference, the committee sent out a survey asking the 70 invited participants to answer the following question: "What do you see to be the three greatest challenges for leaders of workplace learning and performance in the new Millennium?"

These participants included corporate chief and senior executives, researchers in HRD, HRD practitioners in both private and public companies, representatives of the field of Human Resources Management, consultants, line workers and students. Attendance was by invitation only and included representation from the United States, Europe, and Asia. The participant pool was male and female and varied in age from 26-65 years. 41 participant responsed to this survey query for a response rate of 59%.

Analysis of the Survey Data

Each of the surveys asked open-ended questions, resulting in narrative data to be qualitatively analyzed. Data from the two surveys (55 respondents in all) was combined and analyzed to identify emerging themes. The process used was based on the constant comparative method (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) and generic coding procedures. These included analysis of four surveys to develop an initial coding scheme, extensive review of all data, recursive evolutions of the coding scheme, and the use of an electronic database to facilitate queries and coding. One of the authors on this paper created the initial coding scheme and initially coded the data, while the other co-authors served as peer reviewers to help to ensure trustworthiness of the analysis by providing the initial coder with feedback on (a) how well the participant's input was being understood and (b) how effectively meaning of the text was being interpreted given the coder's biases. The results provided below were not unanimously held by all participants, but rather reflect the patterns that emerged from the 55 participants, with an emphasis on those themes that garnered either the most or the strongest responses. What follows is a descriptive and interpretive account of the current strategic thinking of those surveyed for these projects, with examples and quotes to support them as space allows. In addition, the 120 trends identified from the literature were then further analyzed in light of the themes emerging from the survey data. When relevant and or provocative, trends from the literature are incorporated in each of the themes reported below.

Results

The most prominent themes that emerged are presented below. This section first overviews respondents' ideas on the forces affecting HRD in the future. The second section discusses what respondents identified as the primary role and work of HRD in the next 10-15 years. Finally, this section ends by outlining the challenges that respondents believed would need to be overcome if HRD were to thrive in the coming years.

Forces Affecting HRD in the Future

A few key driving forces emerged from the 55 respondents. Interestingly, one theme focused on whether and the extent to which HRD could keep up with changing conditions. Other respondents focused on globalization, technology, and changing organizations and workforce demographics as prominent trends on which to focus. Each is briefly reported on below.

Will HRD keep up? One of the biggest concerns about the future of the profession is its receptiveness and ability to adjust to changing conditions in organizations. Twelve respondents critiqued HRD for not changing with organizational and global demands, and certainly for not being at the forefront of them and taking leadership roles in organizational responses to trends. While a few people did applaud HRD's fast maturation and for how it has grown so quickly, most worried about losing that spirit in the future.

Globalization. Globalization surfaced as a primary trend impacting organizations, and thus HRD, during the next 15-10 years. Overall, ten respondents discussed this theme, focusing primarily on the challenges of truly embracing the process of globalization with all its implications. There were many issues listed including: crossing boundaries of time, space, geography and culture, economic issues, culture clash, working virtually, coping with increased bureaucracy, and exploitation issues arising out of countries with fewer legal restrictions.

The HRD implications of globalization were well cited by 16 respondents. They discussed the need for the profession to better understand and integrate intercultural practices into global organization, rather than assuming or imposing a western view on the people and culture of other countries. And, three respondents called for HRD to reflect deeply about the effect of globalization on all aspects of work and culture, and only then to proceed in developing specific methods for workplace learning and organizational change.

Changing Organizations and Workforce. Organizations of today were consistently characterized by respondents as global, technological, highly flexible, and under great demands to change. Twelve respondents focused on shifting workforce demographics as a key force driving change in HRD. This increasing workforce diversity was characterized by an aging baby-boomer generation, more generations present in the workplace, second and third world countries joining with first world countries' organizations, and varied knowledge/skill levels.

Technology. Five respondents clearly identified technology as a force that will continue to fundamentally shape organizations. "E-everything", one person predicted, was going to continue to change the way work is done and who's doing it to such a degree that we may not recognize what we now call the workplace in 15 years. Twenty-one respondents directly discussed the impact of technology on learning practices such as e-learning and virtual offices. They wondered if HRD would harness and explode the potential of technology, while also effectively integrating it with learning theory premises such as social learning, adult learning, and learning styles. A few others reflected on the impact of technology on the workplace questioning the effect of "virtuality" on basic human needs.

HRD's Role in the Future

There was discussion of the type of work that the profession would be doing and leveraging in future years. This discussion included issues related to identifying and developing HRD's core competencies.

Learning. The responses of twenty-one people comprise the basis of one of the most prominent themes emerging from the two surveys. Learning and human (more specifically adult) development was identified as *the* most powerful competitive advantage of the field. Three people identified HRD as the discipline that takes care of people (including competency, motivation, helping people achieve success, and making work meaningful.) At least five participants warned the field to shift away from its strong emphasis on training and embrace a learning centered mission. Three respondents emphasized the importance of effectively using and integrating learning methodologies in a systemic way in organizations, urging HRD to focus on creating cultures that are truly conductive to learning, including structure, resources, challenging work assignments, and reward systems that foster learning.

Three other participants cited innovative learning practices such as action learning, informal learning, and the "unlearning" process as fundamental competencies for the future. Speed, too, was an issue that was stressed by two participants who underscored how rapidly skills sets will change.

Many respondents indicated their preference that learning be used to impact organizational performance, extending the learning and development theme and explicitly linking it to organizational systems and processes and stressing the importance of having an impact on the success and performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. A relative minority in this data set, a few other respondents did not so heartily embrace this "performance" mission, however even they seemed to agree that organizational constraints (such as time and resources) must be overcome in order to further the learning mission.

Change & Organizational Systems. Six people identified a key role for HRD in the future as that of helping people overcome resistance to and better cope with increasingly rapid change and its implications. In addition, one person emphasized that part of that role entailed building systems that support uncertainties. Related to this, three people cited the critical role of systems thinking and integrating what we do into business and organizational processes.

Knowledge Management/Capital. Four people asserted that HRD must fulfill a key role in knowledge creation and management in organizations. In addition, two people saw this as a way to protect people from information overload inherent in the new economy.

Challenges Facing HRD

Survey respondents identified many challenges facing HRD in the future. The strongest themes were those that focused on HRD's credibility, influence, and impact in organizations.

Organizational Presence and Recognition. There was much discussion (over 26 respondents) about HRD's absence in the "boardroom" and in organizational leadership positions. Other issues related to this problem included inadequate resources, inability to influence strategy and decisions in organization, and HRD's continued "separateness" in the organization.

There were two voices that emerged here. Some respondents talked about these things as if they should simply be happening—as if organizations need to recognize us, allow us access, afford us more respect, etc.... While another critiqued that attitude. For example one person stated that this "belief that we can prove our worth simply by talking and writing a lot and that eventually others will see the light and recognize HRD as worthwhile" is one that constrains the field the most. Most of the respondents aligned with that second voice and attributed the current situation to our lack of relevancy, contribution, and impact on the strategy and/or bottom-line of organizations. These respondents also wondered whether practitioners would gain the skills needed to seriously contribute to the value chain of the organization, to speak the language of the organization, to work to convince organizational leaders that people in organizations and the HRD profession can be of strategic value, to have the courage and tenacity to make a difference in organizations, and to develop the methodologies that integrate HRD in to day-to-day organizational life.

Evaluation & Return on Investment. Twelve respondents more explicitly linked this issue with the profession's inability to be market-driven and demonstrate return-on-investment. Some people talked about building methodologies that went beyond Kirkpatrick's (1994) 4-Level (satisfaction, learning, behavior, results) stronghold on evaluation, and instead fostering many more innovative models by which to judge training effectiveness. Others focused on cost-benefit methodologies and making connections that demonstrate cost-effectives, revenue growth, value, and specific bottom-line impact to stimulate increased investment.

HRD's Identity. Some respondents largely attributed the above challenges to HRD's inability to identify its core competencies and competitive advantage. Eleven respondents projected that the field would collapse due to its inability to define and differentiate itself. These people asserted the field does not know what it is and how it is different from other professions, especially those that are highly related. One question on the survey administered by these authors specifically solicited ideas on the professions that would likely be competitors in the next 10-15 years. Respondents identified Information Technology, Human Resource Management, Organization Development, Management, Knowledge Management, and Industrial/Organization Psychology. Respondents offered multiple reasons why these competitors would emerge, and very few reasons why they *wouldn't* threaten the viability of the HRD profession.

Three respondents did highly value HRD's openness to diversity and hoped that would continue in the future as a key competitive advantage. One person felt that HRD could not define a competitive advantage because it is a process, not an object. Largely, though, most who participated in these surveys felt that, in the words of one participant, "valuing diversity can also be seen as valuing obscurity" and, in the words of many others, was ultimately taking away from valuing focus, discipline, and relevance. One person asserted that it was "egalitarianism that would kill HRD." These respondents argued for a more unified perspective on the profession's identity, vision, and goals. Other people wondered whether this focus would demand a new name for the profession—one that better represents our core values and the work that we do. One person also called for increased internationalizing of the field. Another called for HRD to realize that the tripartite model of HRD (as Training & Development, Organization Development, and Career Development) is obsolete.

Identifying HRD's Stakeholders. An analysis of the data also points to another challenge. While there was much discussion about increasing HRD's presence and contributions in organizations, there was also a vocal contingency that questioned or wished to downplay an emphasis on the organizational context. Twelve respondents talked about expanding notions of whom the profession serves. A few critiqued HRD for being too focused on organizations, and

a large, corporate model of them (rather than small organizations for instance). Others wondered whether HRD would expand its role to working with the community, schools and educational institutions, nations, and society as a whole. For some this was akin to reframing our work in the context of workforce development throughout the lifespan while others focused on community outreach and protecting the most vulnerable in society as well as those that are exploited by organizations.

Standards and Professionalization. Seven respondents wondered whether steps toward professionalization would happen, and identified these as fundamental to future excellence. These included identifying general competencies, standards of practice, certification/credentialing, and increased use of the AHRD Standards on Ethics and Integrity. Of main concern here was that professionals need some way to differentiate between good and bad practice, practitioners, theory/research. And that, while we had made some promising progress in the last 10 years, it has not been enough. Highly related to this, four people wondered whether this lack of identity and movement towards professionalization had or would begin to affect the profession's ability to attract the best and brightest leaders to the field.

Scholarly Leadership. There was much discussion about scholarly leadership in the field. Nine respondents highlighted the need for the field to become truly multi-disciplinary. This included welcoming many perspectives, most especially internationally, as well as being increasingly willing to explore theory and practice that has traditionally been on the fringes as a potential source of material and inspiration. Other people extended this reasoning and encouraged the field to maintain the eclecticism of its youth by attracting and embracing professionals from other fields who can add to HRD. One person foresaw the need to build more strategic alliances with related disciplines. While others envisioned maintaining and widening the diversity that exists in the field currently by increasing dialogue, valuing the dynamics tension of various perspectives, and tearing down barriers for a whole range of practitioners and researchers.

Eight people called for a genuine collaboration between practitioners and academics, and the professional organizations that represent them (i.e. ASTD and AHRD). According to these people, there must be efforts to elegantly connect theory and practice. Six respondents wondered whether HRD research would emerge as a guiding force for practitioners. While the growing number and quality of HRD-specific journals was applauded, many hoped for even more rigor and growth. Respondents also wondered whether HRD would identify its core theoretical bases and begin to develop theories of their own that are substantive and tightly integrated with practice.

Finally, while HRD is beginning to find an academic home in colleges of education, as one person pointed out, it is not always a comfortable one. Five respondents hoped for more academic support at all levels in universities, acknowledgement from colleagues in other disciplines, growth in the number of programs (especially in the western half of the United States), increased numbers of students seeking advanced education in HRD, and for enhanced research-orientation in these programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research queried HRD practitioners and academics, as well as those directly and indirectly involved with HRD, about trends, variables, and challenges that are affecting and may likely affect the profession during the next 15-20 years. It is one of the first data-based surveys to inquire into professionals' ideas about the future of HRD and it, therefore, provides a compelling pulse of the profession's ability to look into the future and identify key future challenges facing the profession.

This research demonstrates that we have much to do if HRD is to thrive in the future. First, we must continue to delve into present trends and future predictions of how they might be amplified. The future cannot be predicted with any certainty. Yet, this is the main reason for studying the future, "to look at what may happen if present trends continue, decide if this is what is desireable, and, if not, work to change it" (World Futurist Society, 2001, pg.2). Knowing about future trends is what empowers us to act. The survey data was rather limited in terms of the projections and ideas that are available. Participants seemed to reflect a limited understanding of future trends. This is not suprising, nor it is a judgement of these participants. Most people tend to have their hands quite full focusing on today and do not think much about the future. However, ignoring driving forces at a profession-level is risky and will likely result in HRD being ill-positioned to make substantial contributions to work-related learning and performance in organizations in the future.

The surveys did point to the continuing prominence of globalization, technology, and shifting workforce demographics as key trends that will impact organizations. Most respondents who reflected on these trends felt that organizations (and HRD) had yet to really comprehend the far-reaching impact of these forces.

Learning was held up as the most powerful differentiator and competitive advantage that HRD has. Both the respondents and the literature agree that the importance of learning will continue to increase. The coming years will demand that learning occur faster, in more diverse places, across more cultural and national boundaries, and with more efficiency (O'connel, 1999; Flanagan, 1999). What is less clear is how this frenzy will be supported. The real challenge for HRD is to find new ways to implement learning technologies that are efficient and effective and that deliver immediate, strategic, and impactful results. The literature and some survey respondents also called for more critical attention from HRD on issues related to knowledge management. This has not yet been heartily embraced in HRD, however the future beckons that we play a dominant role in those initiatives.

There was less talk about the role of HRD in organizational development and change efforts than we had initially expected. The respondents of the second (Future Search) survey tended to identify more with a training/educational role, so this might have skewed the data. However, even in AHRD proceedings and journals we continue to see training issues dominate. One respondent suggested that HRD must accept the obsolescence of the traditional HRD tripartite (Training, Organization Development and Career Development). These authors would concur based on this data and urge the profession to ask itself whether "Human Resource Development" is synonymous with or different from "training". Then, we must look at that in relation to the emphasis on learning in this data to explore how these ideas are connected.

The challenges facing the profession were overwhelmingly clear in participant responses. This data presents a paradox that must be faced—the profession is struggling to earn organizational respect and obtain influence and resources and yet, at the same time, is also struggling to define, delimit, and rigorously evaluate itself. As seen in this data, there is still some debate about whether HRD should limit itself to an organizational context and whether it should truly embrace a performance-improvement mission that addresses organizational systems as well as the traditional training role. This inability to articulate our strategic competitive advantage may necessarily restrict HRD's potential and make the profession vulnerable in the future.

The participants also indicated that HRD's strategic role is in great jeopardy. They felt that HRD must make its relevancy, contribution, and impact on organizational strategy and bottom-line clear, and build a research and knowledgebase that supports this, if it is to thrive in the future. The traditional people management functions of Human Resources Management (HRM), and more broadly Human Resources (HR), are coming under scrutiny in terms of their perceived and measurable strategic value in organizations of the future. It is imperative that HRD acknowledge that the impact of these trends will have significant, knock-on implications, including an increasing need for HRD to articulate and demonstrate its strategic competitive advantage and role in future organizational survival and performance (Anderson, 1997; Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, & Frink, 1999; Woods, 1999).

Furthermore, the literature clearly points to HRM as evolving towards a more development-oriented and consultative role. In times of scarce resources, HRM and other disciplines will figure out how to do what HRD does in their pursuit of strategic influence. While this is explicit in the literature surrounding future trends in HRD/HRM (Hogets et al., 1999; Brockbank, 1999; Wright et al., 1999) it is uncertain whether HRD professionals, as a whole, are truly aware of what is at stake.

Limitations of this Research

There are limitations to this research project. First, although the data reported here is qualitative in nature, it results from two separate surveys with response rates between 35% - 59%. Most survey professionals would agree that a response rate of less than 50% is inadequate and that open-ended questions "rarely assess the level of intensity or a given issue, feeling, or concern" (Church & Waclawksi, 1998, pg. 50). The results reported here are interpreted by these authors, and should be by the reader, as indicative only of the strategic insights of the 55 people who participated in the survey and not as a representative sample of those who were surveyed and did not respond. The results should be interpreted from a perspective rooted in the assumptions of qualitative research rather than quantitative. Secondly, it must be reiterated that this study is only an early mile-marker in a longer journey of understanding the strategic mindset of leaders in the HRD profession.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

This study should be interpreted by practitioners and researchers as a pulse of HRD professionals views of future trends and driving forces that may impact HRD, and the challenges that these present for the profession. It is hoped that the results of this study stimulate critical attention on the future as an issue that we must actively reflect and act on in both our practice and research. Practitioners can make more strategic and forward-thinking decisions with their critical eye on potential ways that the future may unfold, and not be surprised when things they've entertained begin to happen. HRD researchers might use this study to further research future trends and explore their effects at a much

deeper level than was possible here. Furthermore, this study could be used as a baseline for more extensive research about future-thinking in the profession and/or as a springboard to continue on in the scenario planning process.

Most importantly, it is hoped that this study empowers HRD professionals to inspect the current state of the profession given a future context—and, in so doing, act to ensure that 15-20 years from now the profession will be strong and viable and doing important work for people and organizations.

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The Dynamics of the HRD Profession in the Netherlands

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Since 1990, studies have been carried out by the University of Twente to describe, compare and validate HRD roles, competencies and outputs between HRD practitioners in the USA and Europe. In 1993, a replication of the ASTD study was carried out in the Netherlands, which concluded that most of the ASTD roles were reflected in Dutch HRD practice. Findings indicate that the HRD professional in the Netherlands is largely defined as a classical or typical type of trainer.

Keywords: HRD Competencies, HRD Roles, HRD Professional

"Is the HRD profession going to change?" This is the principal question of this replication study, carried out in the Netherlands between January 1999 and September 1999. Since the beginning of the nineties, many comparative surveys have been conducted in the UK, Italy, Belgium, Northern Ireland (Nijhof & De Rijk, 1997), Germany (Odenthal & Nijhof, 1996), and the Netherlands (Van Ginkel, Mulder & Nijhof, 1996). The main goal of these preliminary studies was to gain a picture of the HRD profession in Europe and to see whether the profession is similar to the ASTD roles and competencies described by McLagan et al. (1989). The original question is therefore descriptive and comparative. In most of the studies, a trial was made to validate the outcomes according to the "McLagan Model". In some cases, and in line with the original studies, the question of HRD profiles was expanded in the direction of professional development and relationships to organizational characteristics of companies and HRD departments (Valkeavaara, 1997) and related to theories of personal growth.

Because of the time lag between the first study in the Netherlands (1993) and the situation in 1999, some new insights into the profession and the changes in the world of HRD have stimulated new discussions and questions about the changes in the profession in the last seven years. The availability of a zero-base data set from 1993 provides the opportunity for a replication study, and to see whether the HRD profession has changed. The basic question is therefore whether the HRD profession has changed and, if so, how and why? The assumption is that, on the basis of new trends, new roles have appeared and older ones changed. The study has the character of a monitor, following the main effects of trends in a certain occupational group, to identify new roles and competencies. The study can also falsify theses about the effects of view of learning organizations and their expected impact of turning HRD professionals into coaches and guides, instead of professional trainers. This information can also help to update HRD courses and programs at universities.

The main question of this study is descriptive in nature, and can be broken down into a set of sub-questions:

- What roles do HRD practitioners play, and are these different from 1993?
- What competencies and outputs are related to the roles in 1993 and 1999? Is there any relevant change to be perceived?
- Do megatrends have an impact on the work of HRD practitioners? What, how and why?

The following sections describe the theoretical background of the role studies as well as the trends and their implications for the field of HRD.

Theoretical Background: Professionalization, Role Concept and Performance

" Professional development is [...} the process by which individuals increase their understanding and knowledge, and/or improve their skills and abilities, to perform better in their current positions or to prepare themselves for a position to which they can realistically aspire in the near future" (McCullough, 1987, p. 37). This definition underlines the individual aspect of the professional, the necessity to improve current skills, to perform better and to prepare for the future. This definition is different from professionalization as a process of a group of professionals, in order to gain recognition and accreditation in society, which some writers define as identity formation (Thijssen, 1988). According to Thijssen, this identity formation process consists of four stages:

- task concentration
- job differentiation
- job standardization
- identity profiling

The Dutch Association of HRD Practitioners (NVvO) is nowadays very active in supporting standardization

and certification. This means that the membership is perceived as positioned at the second stage of identity formation, although in many cases steps toward the fourth level can be identified. The number of scholars and professorships at universities related to HRD has multiplied in the last ten years, as have journals and bulletins, conferences and organizations. At national and international level (European as well as global) not only have many new journals appeared in the last five years, but so have associations and conference organizations partly related to HRD, further education and vocational education as producers of initial jobholders. Alongside this process of identity formation, the field of research into HRD and HRM practice shows progress in terms of model evolution and model validation.

In Models of Excellence (McLagan, 1983), 15 roles of HRD practitioners were identified, which could be used for training and development and for describing the field of practice. The study was also criticized for lacking theoretical foundations and the absence of practical consequences. In 1989, McLagan & Sudolnik adopted the critique and replicated the study, using expert appraisals and validating panels. The result of this study was a total of 11 roles and 74 outputs; each role consisted of competencies in order to produce outcomes. In fact, human performance technology and role theory formed the theoretical basis of the study. Using cluster analysis and factor analysis, patterns of roles, competencies and outputs could be identified and validated. In 1996, however, McLagan reflected on these studies in the light of new trends, like information and communication technology, the rise of democracies, globalizing processes in business and industry, the trend toward core competencies of companies, outsourcing, views on the learning organization, and cost-benefit relationships, mostly leading to reduced HRD departments. On the basis of these trends, McLagan identified nine "new roles", which are, however, quite similar to those of 1989. Three roles that disappeared in her new scheme were carried out by more than 25% of the Dutch HRD practitioners in 1993, which is a substantial number.

From the viewpoint of Performance Improvement, Rothwell (1996) distinguished four new roles for HRD practitioners with the core competencies connected to these four roles:

1. Analyst, performing trouble-shooting procedures to diagnose gaps in human performance and identify opportunities for performance improvement;
2. Intervention specialist, selecting the right interventions to cover performance problems;
3. Change manager, being responsible for the implementation of interventions consistent with the intended results;
4. Evaluator, tracking the impact of the interventions and the consequences of the changes.

Rothwell defines 38 competencies and 158 outputs. The competencies are divided into 15 core competencies which are valid for all roles, and 23 competencies, each of which applies to a specific role. Outputs are split into *enabling and terminal outputs*. Terminal outputs are conditional upon enabling outputs. This is an important distinction when compared with the McLagan outputs. In McLagan's conception, all roles, competencies and outputs can have the same weight and relevance and have the same function. Rothwell takes the view of a workflow in which different competencies and outputs play different roles in different phases of the work process. Work is seen as a holistic pattern of activities to realize performance improvement. As a consequence of this conception, the ASTD entrusted to Rothwell the conducting of a new study in 1997 and 1998 of roles and competencies (Rothwell, Sanders & Soper, 1999). Instead of talking about HRD, the authors define workplace learning and performance (WLP) as "the integrated use of learning and other interventions for the purpose of improving individual and organizational performance" (p. xiii). The research is based on the question of which competencies WLP practitioners, senior WLP practitioners and line managers see as essential, now and within five years. Seven new roles have emerged from this study, with competencies and outputs. What is new is that the role of intervention specialist has been split into two new roles: intervention selector and intervention designer/developer. The sequence of roles is very dominant in this study: workflow is essential in this type of analysis. When looking at the outcomes of the McLagan and Rothwell studies, the differences prove to be marginal, although the differences between outputs in enabling and terminal are meaningful.

The European role studies of HRD by the University of Twente were greatly influenced by the ASTD studies. These studies show slight differences in culture and differentiation. The conclusion is that the role definitions are similar, but most of the time more competencies and outputs are selected per role. It could be said that the HRD roles of McLagan (1989) are valid for many European associations, but the content of the roles in terms of jobs and outputs seems to be broader (Odenthal & Nijhof, 1996). This might reflect the dominant role of small and medium-sized enterprises on the European continent, where jobs are more broadly conceived.

While the studies of McLagan et al. (1989), Rothwell et al. (1999) and Nijhof et al. (1997) have a lot of commonalities and show fairly stable results in time, the question is whether the original survey of 1993 should be changed on the basis of new insights into the world of work of the HRD practitioner. In order to make a decision on this, new trends in the field of HRD were analyzed to find indicators for new roles, competencies, and outputs. In the following section, an analysis is made of the trends and implications.

Trends and Implications

It is not easy to detect trends in HRD in a reliable and valid way. The distinction between a hype and a trend is not always unproblematic. When a trend is "a general tendency or course" (Webster's New World, 1997) and a hype " a promotion in a sensational way", it is clear that a trend in HRD is typified by its general character and can be identified in scientific journals and debates as serious scientific paradigm switches of thinking and research. Based on this notion, we will try to describe in a nutshell trends at the global level, at organizational level, at the level of an HRD department and at the level of the HRD professional. Some of these are based on empirical research, and some are idiosyncratic in nature. In all cases, there is some qualitative or quantitative argument to be considered.

Global Trends

Learning seems to be more important than training nowadays. This basic understanding shows a move away from the supply of standardized or customized training to employees, who are responsible themselves for lifelong or lifetime learning. Employability and transferability are becoming the leading motives for business and industry to see human capital as important resources with an exchange value. If employees invest in themselves through learning, the decision and organization about learning moves away from the organization to the individual. It is not too difficult to predict that the price to be paid for the 24-hour economy will be lack of loyalty, lack of commitment, and unstable organizations (Nijhof, De Jong & Beukhof, 1998).

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in work and learning will have a great impact on HRD. "Just-in-time learning" seems to be one of the issues of learning at the workplace (Bastiaens, 1997). But ICT can also be used as a tool for learning outside the company and as a global communication tool. The worker as a self-directed learner would use this technology in the near future for employability, mobility and transferability in a learning society (Nijhof, 1999). Matching learning needs and organizing competencies and knowledge is possible using these new tools by intranet and internet; knowledge banks and intranets could be used for knowledge management and distance learning (Nijhof, 1997). The variation in learning modes, places and ages will be greater than ever. Classroom teaching will drop back to marginal proportions. The idea of learning as construction - as a social event - forces people to rethink their roles in training and learning, and to reframe designs and strategies for HRD departments (Lassnig g, 2001).

Trends at the Organizational Level

One of the most influential concepts at the organizational level is the concept of the learning organization and organizational learning (Senge, 1991) and, as a consequence of this concept, a whole series of studies of knowledge management (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), knowledge creation, and boundary crossing as a new interpretation of transfer as expanded learning emerged (Engeström, 1994). In many cases, there is a convergence with the psychology of learning according to the concepts of constructivism (Billet, 2001; Phillips, 1995; Simons & Ruijters, 2001) and anthropology (Wenger, 1998). Critique (Philips, 1995), however, may help to distinguish between very naïve forms of learning. In many cases, behaviorism is alive in performance technology, and many learning processes can be organized quite effectively according to the principles of cognitivism. Situated learning, cooperative learning and team learning could be powerful means of learning from a constructive view. The consequence is a redefinition of learning and learning environments (Kaiser & Holton, 1998).

Trends at the Level of the HRD Department and the HRD Professional

Some writers see collective learning and the ability to do this as an organization as a precondition for the future. Based on the notions of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1991) of sharing tacit knowledge and expertise, many HRD staff should break away from their roles and competencies, which are based on traditional models of classroom learning and formal knowledge exchange (Eraut, 2001). The role of HRD practitioner, especially the role of trainer, will disappear, while the tendency is for employees to learn through experience at the workplace. If lifelong learning is a serious issue, employee flexibility and employability is placed on the political and business agenda (Brown & Keep, 1999; Nijhof, Van Kieft & Van Woerkom, 2001; Sprenger, 1998). The future role of HRD practitioners could change to that of coach.

The use of new technologies, like Electronic Performance Support Systems (EPSS), as tools for learning at the workplace is predicted to be one of the growing fields in HRD. Bassi, Cheney, Van Buren (1997) conducted a study on the use of ICT and the motives for its use. These are: cost effectiveness, higher instructional quality, customized learning and speed, less hardware and fewer constraints, decentralized instruction and just-in-time motives, and a "teacher" capable of teaching when necessary. Recent research, however, shows that however rational these motives might be the social function of learning should not be underestimated. One of the predictions is that Intranet and learning using networks will take pride of place in this millennium (Bassi et al, 1997). The use of the PC and e-mail is as high as 95% and 81% respectively, while the more advanced technologies like EPSS score as low as 2.5%.

New Trends - New Roles?

As a consequence of knowledge management and outsourcing, one might expect that a company would have to organize interface functions for producing learning events. As a consequence of these trends, the role of

purchaser of training became visible (Van Weele, Mulder & Nijhof, 1995). This role is defined by the following outputs: exploration and analysis of the market for training and development; communication within the organization; assessment of products and services; selection of providers, contracting; monitoring and control of quality, and customer satisfaction.

Trends in the field relating to the learning organization and competence management lead to a possible role of knowledge manager, whose main task is to fine-tune the knowledge needs of the organization and the available knowledge or expertise of employees. In terms of outputs, the knowledge manager produces the development of new knowledge, the targeted distribution of knowledge within the organization, the anchoring of relevant information in the organization, the effective combinations of knowledge, the identifying of information needs, and the fine-tuning of needs and available expertise.

Flexible organizations in combination with trends toward flexibility and employability will have managers in the near future who act more and more like coaches. A coach supports the employees, formulates targets and standards, delegates responsibilities, and provides a supportive shoulder when needed. He gives feedback and reinforces good results, including financial ones. The outputs of a coach are (Twilt, 1996): facilitating learning conditions; supporting learning processes; giving responsibilities; formulating targets and standards; organizing feedback and counseling and guiding to optimal performance.

Many writers perceive the competence manager as a possible new role for HRD practitioners. This role is the potential consequence of virtual organizational thinking and concepts of the knowledge worker and learning societies in which competencies have to be organized in such a manner that the organization as a whole will profit from the expertise. The basis of this role is to see in which direction the company is going to move in the near future. The competence manager has to play a major role in terms of strategy formulation and the definition of competence profiles, and the related skills and levels of mastery. This might lead to so-called personal development plans. It is clear that the knowledge manager and the competence manager have much in common. The latter is a more strategic role; the former a more tactical or operational one.

Quality management of training and development is still high on the agenda of companies. The implementation of quality standards occurs at local and international level. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and ISO are organizations promoting quality in order to achieve excellence and to foster competition worldwide to do better. Benchmarking is one of the tools that can be used to compare the quality of companies. It is the duty and the task of quality managers to manage and monitor the processes to produce quality. In the field of HRD too, quality managers have to design, develop, evaluate and adapt HRD programs according to quality standards.

Role or Competence: Entrepreneurship?

On the basis of an analysis of the literature, entrepreneurship is seen as one of the possible consequences of a changing labor market, where employers select and screen candidates in the perspective of flexible labor contracts. Odenthal & Nijhof (1996) found in their study of German HRD roles a new phenomenon: the entrepreneur.

However, it is difficult to perceive entrepreneur as a role with special competencies and outputs. It seems to be more adequate to formulate entrepreneur as a new competence requested by the market, a competence needed by many jobholders. Entrepreneurship is seen nowadays as a condition for a job and for different task areas, especially for business people. Entrepreneurship in the framework of HRD means a competence in starting an HRD company, department or innovation. This is based on niches in the HRD market or on a specialized skill or expertise; setting up a business plan, and being able to stimulate and motivate colleagues to collective action is the entrepreneurial competence par excellence.

In the last ten years, some important trends and developments have emerged. On the basis of the foregoing analysis, five new roles were identified, which were not included in the McLagan et al. study or in the Rothwell studies: purchaser, knowledge manager, coach, competence manager, and quality manager. These roles will be integrated into the survey to check whether they exist in practice, and whether the classical roles of trainer and coordinator of training and development are disappearing.

Survey Design and Instrumentation

This study was set up on the basis of a survey design as used in 1993 to obtain an answer to the main question and to a number of special, more detailed questions. This meant that the key instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire. While data were collected in 1999 and were compared with those from 1993, the possibilities of comparison were expanded using the questionnaire of 1993. The five new roles, with new competencies and outputs as well as the competence of entrepreneurship, were added.

The population was the membership of the Dutch Association of HRD Practitioners (NVvO) (N= 2476). In 1993, the size of the population was 1342. The response was seen as a sample of the population. Personal data was used to check the representativeness of the sample.

The questionnaire consisted of 7 parts:

- Part 1: The Job (formal label, tasks and duties)
- Part 2: Duty or role (experience, years, proportion of the workload, part-time/full-time)

- Part 3: Outputs of the role (101 outputs were defined, practitioners had to select which outputs were essential for their role);
- Part 4: Competencies of the role (relevance, expertise, level of mastery)
- Part 5: Developments and trends in HRD (opinions of practitioners in terms of impact of trends on their daily work);
- Part 6: Impact of new Information and Communication Technologies on their work and expectations for the next five years related to this;
- Part 7: General characteristics of respondents

Data collection took place in May 1999. The response, even after a non-response search, in which lack of time was the most frequent excuse, was about 13% (n=326), which is rather low for a group of professionals, who might be expected to be interested in their profession and professionalization. However, the response for other national surveys is similar (see Table 1). In 1993, the response was 70%, but from a preselected sample of 425, from a population of 1342.

Table 1: *Response in Different Countries using the Questionnaire*

Country	Send	Received	Proportion
Belgium (1993)	200	53	26.5
England (1993)	1740	228	13.1
N.Ireland (1993)	330	37	11.2
Italy (1993)	700	105	15
Netherlands (1993)	425	297	70
Germany (1996)	998	190	19
Finland (1997)	699	164	23.5

In 1993, the reliability of the different scales, based on Cronbach's alpha, was very satisfactory (Van Ginkel et al., 1994). In 1999, the alphas were also very satisfactory. The scores are presented in the next table. (Table 2).

Table 2: *Cronbach's Alphas for the Different Scales and Instruments*

Cronbachs alphas	NVvO study 1993	NVvO Study 1999
Roles	.76	.74
Outputs	.92	.94
Competencies (relevance)	.85	.90
Competencies (mastery)	.94	.92
Trends in HRD	n.a.	.70
Impact of trends on HRD	n.a.	.88
Use of new technologies (ICT)	n.a.	.83

The representativeness of the sample was checked against the population. The sample did not differ significantly in terms of age, branch, size of companies and jobs (tasks). In terms of gender, a significant difference was detected (t (2798)=2.932;p=0.003), but there was no effect of gender on the selection of roles or tasks. The conclusion is that the sample is representative of the population. (Kieft & Nijhof, 2000, p. 61). 99% had enjoyed higher education (university or polytechnic); in 1993, this percentage was slightly lower.

Results

The main question of this study is whether the HRD profession is changing as a consequence of global trends. The underlying questions are related to changes in competencies and outputs related to roles and the time interval of 7 years. First, we address the question of changing roles.

Role Change

What does the HRD profession look like in 1999? Respondents stated that about 10 duties were apart of their role, with a standard deviation of 3.7. A large number of these duties or tasks reflected developing activities, such as reading recent literature, designing and developing training, organizing networks and contacts, providing advice and consultancy to the manager. Professionalization seemed to be one of the most important activities, followed by training and communication within and outside the company. Personnel management was the responsibility of 25% of the sample. Because of the number of tasks, there seems to be a great deal of overlap between the different roles.

What roles did Dutch HRD practitioners play in 1999 compared with 1993? Table 3 gives an answer to this question. Almost 25% of the sample were trainers. This is the highest frequency, followed by coordinator of training (15%) and organization developer (15%). The role of management and coordination of training covers 13%. About 67% of the roles were covered by the traditional roles of managing, planning, coordination and execution of training. The new roles of coach (2.5%), competence manager (2.2%), knowledge manager (1.2%), quality manager (0.3%), and purchaser of training (0.3%) were marginal or almost non-existent.

Table 3: *Roles of HRD Practitioners 1993-1999 (in %)*

	1993	1999
Trainer	11.4	24.7
Coordinator of training	12.1	15.4
Organization developer	8.8	15.4
Manager of training strategies	10.8	12.7
Other+	***	8.6
Designer of training	9.8	4.3
Marketer	8.4	3.7
Career developer	11.1	2.5
Coach	***	2.5
Developer of training material	8.4	2.2
Competence manager	***	2.2
Needs analyst	10.8	1.9
Researcher	3.4	1.5
Knowledge manager	***	1.2
Evaluator and impact controller	5.1	0.6
Quality manager	***	0.3
Purchaser of training	***	0.3

*** This role was not part of the 1993 survey
\+ 'Other' means that respondents had chosen to take more than just one role.

A large number of the respondents were focused on training coordination and planning (almost 40%). OD and management of training were relatively high (almost 30%). About four roles covered 70% of the roles; in 1993, this was about 41%. What we perceive is an important change and even a concentration on four roles related to training.

Outputs

The role concept used by ASTD in 1989 and before concentrates on roles, competencies and outputs. Outputs are the consequences of actions based on competencies. Part of the problem is that outputs can have an intermediate effect or be an ultimate result of actions; ASTD does not distinguish between the two. Sometimes this concept may threaten the validity of the measurement. For the sake of comparison with the 1993 study, we maintained the concept of output and used 101 outputs for evaluation, based on all the roles, including the new ones.

Although ICT is growing in use in the professions, it seems that ICT barely penetrated the field of HRD in 1999. The output of "communication within the own organization" is very dominant.

Outputs connected with the implementation of training scored very high on the list. In Table 4, the top ten outputs are compared with those of 1993.

Table 4: *Top Ten Outputs in 1999 and 1993 (in %)*

Outputs	1999	1993
Realizing positive image HRD activities	69.2	81.2
Contracts for training	69.1	77.9
Evaluation processes	65.8	79.7
Professional advice or reference to third parties	64.6	82.4
Feedback to learners	62.7	75.0
Recommendations about necessary changes in the functioning of persons, divisions or organization	62.6	70.3
Team-building	62.4	58.2
Policy development of HRD training	61.9	77
Newly qualified people	60.7	71.4
Recommendations to management regarding HRD	60	71.4

Competencies

The ASTD survey distinguishes between four groups of competencies: disciplinary or subject matter, business-related, communicative, and intellectual competencies. In the survey, a competency was rated as relevant when 60% of the respondents scored on these competencies. From the data, we learned that communicative competencies were the most important ones, while business-related competencies scored the lowest. The standard deviation, however, was the greatest in this last category, which means that respondents differed in terms of the relevance of these competencies. This result might be affected by the difference between entrepreneurs and internal officers of HRD.

Table 5: *Relevance and Being Competent on Competence Categories*

Competencies	Relevance		Competent	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Discipline	2.06	.41	3.81	.62
Business	2.03	.61	3.77	.90
Communication	2.56	.41	4.62	.77
Intellectual	2.38	.48	4.34	.73

1= very important/relevant; 5= not important/relevant

Discipline or HRD Competencies. Formulating learning objectives was the most important skill, followed by insight into the learning process of adults. Respondents felt relatively competent in these skill areas. Research skills or competencies were not perceived as important, which seems strange in a profession in which the orientation toward outputs is dominant.

Business Competencies. None of the business competencies taken up in the survey were felt to be really important, based on the criterion that at least 60% of the respondents had to name them as important. Their own mastery of business competencies was rated as average.

Communicative Competencies. Most competencies were rated as relevant, especially social skills, feedback skills, raising questions, presentation skills, coaching, and guiding team processes. These skills are very important in the professional job of trainer and were evidently not seen as part of HRD competency or discipline like competencies. The level of skills was rated as high, with the exception of team processes.

Intellectual Competencies. Self-efficacy, intellectual versatility, and perception seem to be relevant intellectual competencies for HRD practitioners. The respondents estimated their skills in this area as rather high. Competencies like setting up scenarios for the future or creating models were estimated as low.

Outputs

Besides the qualitative analysis in terms of relevance and mastery, it was important to know how the quantitative dispersion of competencies related to 1993 and to the original ASTD study of 1989. From the data we could conclude that the ASTD study no longer fitted the Dutch situation in 1999. In Table 6 (not included) the outputs were compared between 1999, 1993 and the ASTD study of 1989. The main areas of activities of HRD professionals as formulated in 1993 functioned as points of reference.

From Table 6 (not included), we learned that most respondents realized more outputs than in the ASTD study (1989). This outcome was connected to the different designs of the studies. In the Dutch studies, the respondents could indicate which outputs were related to task areas. The number of outputs was 101 in 1999, and 74 in 1993. Even in 1993 Dutch HRD practitioners indicated far more competencies per area than did ASTD respondents. This might indicate a broader conception of the area in question inthe Netherlands.

Looking at the proportions of the competencies, we see that needs assessment scored quite high in 1999, as did HRD policy and management. In 1993 OD came top. One of the possible paradoxes now is that the sum of competencies is not necessarily the most important or frequent role, as described earlier.

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Current HRD Trends in the Netherlands: Conceptualization and Practices

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This contribution reviews literature concerning current HRD developments. The resulting literature outcomes have been discussed with a group of experts in the field of HRD. The remarks of this group, consisting of both academics as well as practitioners, has been used to outline a conceptual framework on current HRD developments and to illustrate the conceptual framework with examples of practices concerning HRD developments in the (late) nineties.

Keywords: Trends, Organizational practices, Expert opinions

There appears to be a large discrepancy between the reality in HRD practices and contemporary theories on HRD developments. Firstly, training and intentional learning do not occur frequently, and development processes do not happen as systematically and consciously as assumed. Besides, there is evidence that learning opportunities are unequally divided across the workforce, with managers and higher level employees enjoying relatively privileged positions.

It seems obvious that changes in job requirements due to continuously increasing employability demands necessitate to pay attention to the fit between demands and supplies in the domain of professional development. Nevertheless, it may be questioned whether proposed theoretical solutions are applicable and emergent in practice, which is considered as a second discrepancy (Senge, 1990). Especially in the domain of organizational learning "too often, rhetoric and conceptualization do not seem to lead to any substantial progress in theory-building or in practice in the field" (Harrison, 2000, p. 254).

The discrepancy between HRD theory and practice urges us to confront theorizing in the field with empirical outcomes. It is important to find out to what extent attention is paid to organizing, shaping and managing the processes of learning and development within working organizations. In order to chart this attention, we will go into HRD developments both from some theoretical perspectives as well as grounded with data gathered during working conferences. The aim of this endeavor is to track down both examples of current developments as described in literature, as well as empirical evidence. Moreover, we want to raise opportunities for HRD practitioners to add new insights to (our) theoretical positions and to explore the potential of a powerful source in building theory within the HRD domain. Both in review and data collection we kept a focus on large companies as the infrastructure for human resource development was expected to be most prevalent in these.

Theoretical Outlines

In the coming sections the literature on HRD developments in the (late) nineties is reported. A division in three areas of description has been made, i.e. developments outside working organizations, developments inside working organizations, and developments within the domain of HRD.

Developments outside Working Organizations

During the last ten years our economy has transformed into a knowledge economy (McLagan, 1999). The implications this entails for qualification requirements are considerably. As the life-cycles of occupations and functions offered by organizations have shortened tremendously in the last twenty years,mastering learning and coping strategies and the transferability of these seem to be important topics for psychological and development research in organizations (Boerlijst, Munnichs & Van der Heijden, 1998).

Yet, only in the last two decades have career researchers started to pay attention to the idea of development

throughout one's career (Hall, 1986; Van der Heijden, 1998). This attention shows the growing concern about professional development throughout the working life. Because of the importance of continuously updating knowledge and skills, both the organization and the individual are held responsible for optimizing this development interactively.

Individuals who are able to survive the emergence of the information society, the internationalization of the economy and scientific and technological progress, are the ones with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills, but also with the capability to continuously build up new expertise requirements. Next to the computerization, the increasing globalization, internationalization, and continuously changing markets and products, one can detect changes in customer needs and behavior (see for example the increase in ecologically sound products). More and more companies privatize and are driven by market economy concepts. Obviously these changes too have many implications for the job requirements of individual employees, as innovation and technological changes poses strong demands on developing communicative and problem-solving skills (Horwitz, 1999; OECD, 2000).

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an aspect that burdens heavily on the necessary knowledge and skills to perform well in nowadays jobs. Also one can notice an increase in the use of ICT in training and development programs, both in schools as well as in company settings (Rosenberg, 2001). The latter, obviously, aggravates appeals to the individual employee in an era wherein workloads are already impressively high.

Demographic changes like the increase in women participating onto the labor market, the increasing participation of ethnic minorities, aging of the workforce and the ongoing dejuvenization have necessitated the attention for the guidance of life-long employability. Training and development programs ought to be tailored to the specific needs of classes of employees in order to increase chances of assimilation into the labor market.

Besides, more and more formal certifications are expected in order to guarantee the value of educational activities. This is why checks as to the content of educational programs and HRD programs, in general, deserve serious attention. In all sectors of higher education and vocational training one can see an increase in the attention towards customer needs. Besides, more and more one strives for a fine-tuning in educational programs with practice. For example developments like competence-based curricula, dualizing and contract education.

If the former is combined with the concerns of HRD professionals as to how to cope with the labor shortage in many areas, one can imagine the pressure that is felt by the profession as a whole.

Developments inside Working Organizations

In all sectors of the labor market one of the key changes has been the growing urge to monitor organizational aims in order to come to meet flexibility requirements, quality requirements and reduction of costs. A result has been an increasing flattening of organizations, working with business units and outsourcing of non-core tasks.

Besides, a number of developments have taken place, performance-orientation being the most far-reaching. Tayloristic modes of organizing have been changed with principles like job-enrichment and team working. In higher level jobs more and more employees telework which enables them a high amount of quantitative flexibility without losing the possibilities to keep in touch with colleagues both inside and outside the organization (E-mail, internet, mobile telephones, fax).

The increased attention for performance enhancement has enlarged the popularity of the concept of the learning organization (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994). The perspective of the *learning organization* is aimed at optimizing learning processes of both individual employees as well as the working organization as a whole (Marsick & Watkins, 1999). Despite the fact that many organizations have faced difficulties in translating the philosophy behind the concept in concrete management activities (Garvin, 2000), attention for the subject has led to an increase in developmental activities (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, Roth & Kleiner, 1999).

More and more top management really pays attention to on-the-job learning, implicit learning processes, knowledge sharing and improvements in working processes, products or services (Gourlay, 2001; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Middle management, on the other hand, is expected to guide individual career development by means of job evaluations, assessment of training and development needs, coaching and so on. Yet, in earlier studies we have found a scarcity and often a complete absence of managerial actions or measures taken to stimulate the employee's further growth and development of his or her flexibility or versatility. Supervisors often observe a declining *learning value* (that is to say the value which the function has as nutrient for the employee's further development) of the functions of their aging employees but do not seem to react to it by enhancing this value. The function becomes void of learning stimuli and new learning challenges. This can even happen in higher level jobs that are extremely important for the organization and perhaps highly complex and demanding.

Yet, guiding the individual career development is not only the responsibility of management in working organizations. Employees themselves are also expected to put a lot of effort and energy in improving their employability. Both the individual and his or her immediate supervisor should be engaged actively in the development of the individual's capabilities. In addition to training and development programs it is important to provide work experience with opportunities to use talents and to develop professional expertise, preferably in more than one area of expertise. The employees themselves are the ones who have to take an entrepreneurial approach to their own career development (Rhebergen & Wognum, 1996), and to display a learning attitude. It requires a 'hunger' for activities that benefit further growth.

Opposite to the need to enlarge one's employability, maybe even in an external sense implying that the employee's attractiveness for competitors increases as well, organizations try to guard the commitment from the employee towards the organization. More and more, flexworkers, part-time workers and knowledge workers question the need for a high amount of commitment to one particular organization. Next to the tension between the need to enlarging the amount of employability and guiding the commitment, problems entailed by increasing work loads and burnout issues force the different management layers in a continuing dialogue with the employees in order to deal carefully with the fit between the worker and the job (Kwakman, 2001).

Developments within the Domain of HRD

Obviously, the previously mentioned developments have implications for the performances that are required and thus for the job content and organization of individual jobs (Torraco, 1999). More and more job requirements have to be expanded with key qualifications like eagerness to learn, flexibility, and readiness to work together in teams. Besides, vocational training is not enough to enable the employee to function qualitatively well throughout the career. Life-long learning and competence development is considered to be the key answer (Garavan, Heraty & Barnicle, 1999). Short-term attention for career development in which employees are used to fulfil organizational goals that do exist in the here-and-now do not longer guarantee the individual employability in a longer sense. Due to enormous changes in professional fields life-long employment has been replaced by life-long employability which can only be reached in case both management as well as the employee anticipate as to which professional developments have to be attained (Kwakman, 1999). The latter can imply that short-term goals are not longer put in front in each and every case. This brings about the challenging though difficult to reach need for HRD specialists to find an equilibrium between organizational interests (need for high performances) and individual interests, e.g. the need for self-actualization (Confessore & Smith, 1998).

The increasing attention for life-long learning has led to a change in the way learning processes are organized. More and more HRD specialists start to recognize the value of other forms of training and development, for example 'training-on-the-job', computer-supported programs, web-based learning, coaching and support on the job (Bassi, Cheney & Lewis, 1998). Besides, training and development is no longer seen as the only solution in order to build up new knowledge and skills. More and more, changes in the organization of work, such as introducing autonomous teams are seen as a possibility to enlarge competence bases (Stahl, Nyhan & D'Aloja, 1993).

The developments that have been outlined so far have altered the role of the HRD specialist. More than before, he or she has to act as a counselor who facilitates line management and individual employees in carrying out the employability-enhancing and learning activities (Ellinger, 1998). In order to integrate knowledge management and competence management into the domain of HRD-practitioners, one has to translate strategic decisions into HRD-policies throughout all organizational layers (Bassi et al., 1998).

Research Methodology

In order to gain insight into the extent to which practitioners agreed on current HRD developments and their impact as outlined in the theoretical paper, the literature results were discussed with them, using principles of the Delphi method. The Delphi method was originally developed by the Rand Corporation in the 1950s as a data collection approach designed for structuring group opinions in order to enable group decision making. By gathering expert opinions (within a homogeneous group of experts) about complex problems consensus is striven for. Consensus is reached by using different rounds of data collection; the researcher organizes, analyzes, and summarizes the different responses and asks experts to respond again. Experts are also asked to provide an explanation for their responses and these explanations play an important role in summarizing and adjusting different responses (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000). As the method is very useful to collect opinions about abstract and rather vague topics, the method is used frequently to anticipate future trends (Leirman, 1995; Ritchie & Earnest, 1999). However, most researchers use a variant of the original method, and a lot of variants have arisen in the literature (Leirman, 1995; Snyder-Halpern, 2001).

In this research we use the variant of the original method which is described by Leirman as a participatory Delphi. In a participatory Delphi an informed group presents all options and evidence for a specific line of reasoning or consideration in order to generate all possible opposing views. We used this variant as we aimed at consensus about the occurrence of current HRD developments in practice but we did not want to exclude opposing or new views otherwise. So, we decided to present the literature results to a group of experts in two rounds. In the first round we discussed our preliminary literature outcomes with a group of HRD practitioners and researchers. As we intended to verify and expand the outcomes, we asked for their opinions about the adequacy and validity of the current developments described. As a result of this, developments were refined, extended, and grouped otherwise whereas also more literature was studied. Then the final outline was written. In the second round we presented this theoretical outline to a group of experts during two working conferences. In these conferences participants were asked to state their opinions as well as reasons underlying their opinions. Participants were also asked to react as to what extent the outline sketches all relevant developments, as well as to sketch opposing viewpoints or experiences. The aim of the procedure was to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are the developments that have been outlined in the research report significant for your organization?
2. Which developments in the domain of training and development have been taken place in your organization, during the last ten years?

Sampling was purposive, based on a "snowball" sampling strategy as one of the possible strategies in inductive, theory-building analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We tried to compose groups of experts with equal job responsibilities but from different branches of organizations. Eventually, all experts involved were holding jobs, which involved large responsibilities for organizing and managing HRD within large organizations (in the profit- as well as the non-profit sector) in the Netherlands, so can be considered as a homogeneous group.

Results

In the following sections, the outcomes of the two working conferences will be reported. The categories of description are similar to the ones that have been used for the theoretical outlines.

Developments outside Working Organizations

The participating HRD specialists, when asked for external developments, mentioned on the one hand the importance of the 'human factor' and on the other hand the impact in the HRD field of the internationalization and globalization of markets as well as products. Next to these two main areas of change, some participants reported the influence of technological developments and the implications of the job market.

As far as the first factor is concerned, representatives of DAF and DaimlerChrysler gave a good illustration. Nowadays DAF offers solutions for mobility problems instead of producing cars, trucks etceteras. Because of the fact that unique products are created, individual employees are the most important organizational assets. Competencies have to be built up and quality management has to be a core part of HRM practices. At DaimlerChrysler the importance of the human factor has even been formalized. In order to reach high-quality Human Resource Management all HRM-instruments have been integrated and the responsibility for the employee development has been laid down with the employee him or herself. The individual workers are expected to formulate personal development goals and ideas to reach them. Secondly, the focus of the evaluation of the HRD professionals has been changed from their efforts in the area of training and development to the return of investments at the level of the behavior of the individual employee. The latter meaning that HRD-professionals have to make a connection between developmental needs of individual employees and organizational development goals.

As far as the internationalization and globalization are concerned we have five examples of the implications these developments have on a company level. ABN-AMRO has chosen for an approach that focuses on internationalization on an European scale. As a consequence, internal vocational training institutes have become smaller. Whenever possible, vocational training programs are outsourced and the department of training and development nowadays merely has directing and advising tasks.

For Toshiba Medical, the internationalization has led to an increasing pressure in terms of the time that is available to train employees. E-mail, globalization, a growing amount of foreign employees, and the need to commit higher level technicians to the company has led to the need for efficient training programs in much shorter time spans. The primary responsibility for assessing training needs has been moved to the line management in a continuous dialogue with the individual employee. The latter also applies to the TNT Post Group, a holding employing 120.000 people in 120 countries. This decentralization of the training and education function urges to a

translation of strategic higher-order issues to locally feasible practices. In order to provide with this need and to prepare trainers to enormous differences between countries, TNT Post Group has established an academy for trainers.

The fact that internationalization and globalization do not automatically lead to a decrease in training and development activities has further been illustrated by the HRD representative of PriceWaterhouseCoopers. Currently, their training budget is around one billion dollar. Their programs are clearly aimed at enlarging the commitment of the employee towards the organization together with enabling the professionals, who are supposed to be highly employable, to perform qualitatively high. In order to ensure that an employee is suitable to perform services for the organization's customers, a 'license to audit' has to be granted. Besides, team working is encouraged and is supposed to enlarge one's competence base by exchanging valuable knowledge and skills. For the department of T&D these developments have led to the system of 'contracting', i.e. preliminary to the performance of activities, agreements are made regarding who, when and where and what subject will be trained.

For Polaroid Europe we can detect a centralization tendency as a result of the internationalization. Although the different locations are expected to work closely with the central training department in the United States, in practice it is not quite clear in how far one is responsible for formulating strategic goals.

As far as the third factor, i.e. technological developments is concerned, both the representative of Hollandse Signaal Apparaten and the one of the Dutch Air Force went into its consequences. It was reported that next to information and communication technology, advanced technological knowledge of material and products is indispensable for current functioning of these working organizations. At Hollandse Signaal Apparaten one signals the need to get hold of experts both for internal use as well as for their customers. In order to respond to this need three different types of educational programs have been developed, i.e. education for their own employees, education for customers who have bought their materials, and education for their future customers.

For the Dutch Air Force, training and education has always been a focal point. The technical and highly specific requirements for flying a certain plane and also the demands of quality and safety have forced them to large investments in training and development. The responsibility for making reliable assessments of the training needs has been laid down at the line management.

As regards the last mentioned topic of the influence of the job market, three organizations have referred to it and have indicated its consequences in the domain of HRD. Because of the fact that the University of Twente has a surplus of employees in relation to the available jobs and the costs that are brought about by this, the University has started to pay attention to retraining and job market preparation programs. Next to a mobility center that has been established with the aim of enlarging one's knowledge and skills, outplacement programs have been developed.

In the Martini hospital, on the contrary, one has great difficulties to find qualified personnel. Part of the problem is due to the minor interest in health service jobs, but also the geographical location (in the North of the Netherlands). Aside from that, new strict laws concerning times to rest and recovery for health professionals have exaggerated occupational problems. Moreover, the dejuvenization and the aging of the working population necessitate paying attention to the implications of the increasing workload for the elderly. This urge the ARBO-dienst (services of conditions of employment) and the department of Training and Development to put the topic of the guidance of mobility and employability, and the ways this can be reached, high on the agenda. Similarly, the AWVN (General Employers' Association in the Netherlands) has made the topic of the guidance of employability to be the central point of attention. More emphasis on the individual career development and a broader definition of training goals are elevated into the key points of attention.

Comparing the developments mentioned in the theoretical outline one can conclude that participants do stress the same three main factors lying behind the current developments, i.e. economy, technology, and labor market. Although the outline also describes developments in the area of legislation, vocational education, or social-cultural developments, the participants did not mention about these particular developments. This does not imply that these latter types of developments do not occur, but that they are regarded of minor importance in affecting the HRD field.

Developments inside Working Organizations

As indicated in the corresponding section in the theoretical outlines, many organizations are forced to re-orientate on their organizational goals and to reconsider their present organization of jobs. Representatives from Generali Assurances, Canisius Hospital, Hoogovens and Connexxion give accompanying examples.

For Generali Assurances, the change towards a customer-oriented organization has led to a centralization of the output norms, i.e. customer satisfaction and cost awareness. Especially the focus on customer awareness has implied an enormous increase in training costs. At the Canisius hospital, the focus of customer satisfaction has led to multidisciplinary tasks for the medical staff. The department of training and education has been outsourced to the

ARBO-dienst (service of conditions of employment). Besides, a reorganization leading to a flattening of the organization has led to new HRD questions. Interdisciplinary team work for professionals and delegating management skills being two examples. In this hospital, competence management, broadening of tasks and learning strategies are key issues in current personnel management tasks.

At Hoogovens, a reorganization has led to the introduction of business units with their own responsibilities, and that are delegated to the line management, in order to upgrade the professional expertise of each individual employee. A problem one encounters is the lack of an overview of developments in the specific professional domains and in the training programs that are given. In order to enable the HRD function to facilitate business management in the different units, one should have more insight into the specific requirements in the jobs of the professionals in each business unit.

Connexxion, a transport company, which is the result of a fusion, concentrates on management development and education management in consideration of the guidance of competencies and in order to respond to the need for performance enhancement. Previously used job descriptions and performance evaluations are currently substituted by elaborated reports on systematically determining and developing competencies.

The perspective of the 'learning organization' forms the basis of the management philosophy of Gamma Holding, a textile industry company. Its philosophy is based on three conditions, i.e. delivering a high quality, using advanced technology and applying cunning logistics. In the Netherlands, Gamma Holding employs 2200 people, world-wide 10.000. A recent reorganization implied a change from a labor-intensive to a capital-intensive company meaning a change in range of products as well. At the moment one can characterize the company as process-driven and results-oriented, with a lot of investments in its innovative and technological capacities. Team building is used as a means to consciousness-raising for the philosophy of the learning organization. Competence management is one of the building pillars in this sense.

As far as the subject of commitment is concerned, a clarifying example can be found in the AKZO strategy where one, in order to enhance the individual commitment, puts a lot of energy in formulating norms and values people can identify with. Also at Connexion one tries to establish longer term working relationships by investigating which factors are highly valuable for people. For Hollandse Signaal Apparaten, on the other hand, commitment is not conceived to be a problem. The representative reports relatively long terms of duration of the employees within the company.

Comparing these examples with the theoretical outline, it is obvious that theory and practice both stress structural as well as cultural changes taking place within work organizations in order to attain organizational goals as well as to improve the level of performance.

Developments within the Domain of HRD

Apparently, in the outlines that are given up to now, one can detect a change in main strategy that can be characterized by means of a transition from 'education-minded' towards 'life-long learning-minded'. Many learning processes are founded on the need to enlarge one's employability. For example, the Rabobank (a Dutch banking organization) academy has formulated as its aim; the transition from lifetime employment towards life-long employability. Besides, the representative reports that more and more attention is paid to working in multidisciplinary teams, guiding one's own career, taking initiatives and pro-active thinking and acting.

The Dutch Railways has established a mobility center that both supports employees and prevents career problems. Each employee is enabled to have a career advice every three years. The Academic Hospital in Utrecht, nowadays, pays more attention to Human Resource Management activities because of the fact that there is too much outflow of personnel. Firstly, more training and education possibilities have been created. Secondly, a job satisfaction survey has been done and finally, measures to enlarge the amount of job satisfaction have been undertaken.

In all examples mentioned before one can detect a trend in which the responsibility for HRM activities are laid down with the line management. More and more HRD specialists act as advising partners (see for example at Start, an employment agency in the Netherlands). Training and education are more than ever outsourced while the existing departments of training and education are used especially for management development trajectories (see for example the so-called Business School at the AWVN (General Employers' Association in the Netherlands).

At Vredestein, the HRD managers take care of signaling new developments, trying to find possibilities in the job market, formulating strategic plans and so on, while in the past they mostly spent a lot of time taking care of all training and education activities.

As far as competence management is concerned, the representative of PriceWaterhouseCoopers mentioned the birth of new jobs in the field, like knowledge managers, electronic learning experts and information technologists.

All these jobs are aimed at building up knowledge and skills bases in individual employees throughout the organization and in an on-going sense, i.e. during the entire career.

In comparison with the theoretical outline, a first impression of the developments mentioned by practitioners is that they resemble the developments determined theoretically to a large extent. However, a shift in the way learning processes are organized, as predicted in theory, can hardly be recognized in practice. Although the need for this shift is recognized in practice, examples of other ways of organizing learning are hardly given. This may lead us to conclude that the undertaken activities are not in line yet with the ideas and wishes in this respect.

Conclusions including Contribution to New Knowledge in HRD

The confrontation between theory and practice that was deliberately staged in the working conferences appeared to be fruitful as it yielded some new insights to our theoretical views. Firstly, a diversity of working organizations largely recognizes the developments as described in literature to a certain extent. So, the outline appears to be suitable to describe and further analyze HRD developments. Nevertheless, all experts agreed that it only suits large organizations or multinationals, and that it does not apply to small and medium sized enterprises as well as to non-governmental organizations. It was also remarked that the outline should pay more attention to international developments, as a lot of organizations will face an increasing globalization and internationalization.

Secondly, although the experts recognized and consolidated a lot of different developments, it became clear that not all developments are of equal importance within specific organizations in the same time period. Organizations do face several challenges, which may be provoked by developments as described, but precise implications of different developments vary from organization to organization. As illustrated one specific development can lead to a large variety of different consequences, dependent on the context and the extent to which other developments apply. This is partly due to the fact that many of the developments are intertwined, so that it is not easy at all to differentiate between the developments that have been outlined.

Thirdly, we also have to conclude that almost all HRD developments derive from developments both inside as well as outside organizations because of the fact that HRD activities and goals do change as a result of these developments. Consequently, developments regarding the HRD-domain hardly arise from the domain itself, as the domain is mostly reactive to outside changes and to new demands and challenges. What makes it even more complex is that responses of the HRD-domain seem to vary according to the specific situation of the organization. As the results reveal, every organization takes other measures to cope with new developments. Actually, this is in line with other reviews of HRD developments and functions which apply also outside the Netherlands (Baets & Van der Linden, 2000; OECD, 2000; Garavan et al., 1999; Willmore, 1999).

Thus, similar developments going on outside organizations do influence HRD and HRD responses within organizations, but they do not automatically lead to the same types of responses (Poell & Van der Krogt, 2001). Obviously, processes and dynamics within organizations seem to play a major role in determining these responses. Understanding these processes and dynamics may be a new topic in HRD research that will deliver worthwhile insights to better understand HRD practices.

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