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Human Resource Development Review 2005 4: 418
DOI: 10.1177/1534484305281006

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Reviving the Relevance of Career Development in Human Resource Development

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The nature of work, organizations, and careers has evolved significantly in the past decade. In the wake of these changes, career-development research and implementation have languished. This article addresses this dearth of discourse and practice from the perspective of human resource development (HRD). The authors suggest a framework for reintegrating career development into the HRD function and offer specific learning activities better suited to the needs of individuals and organizations in this turbulent environment. Recommendations for future action are provided.

Keywords: *career development; boundaryless careers; protean career; informal learning*

Although career development remains one of the established focal points of human resource development efforts, it seemingly has been overshadowed of late by research and discourse addressing other aspects of HRD (Swanson & Holton, 2001). In some ways, this is not surprising. Although lean organizations facing increased global competition need a cadre of prepared employees to fulfill their strategic goals, changes in perceptions about career progression and the nature of work have led to uncertainty about career development as a concept and as a practice. In fact, the idea of career development seems at odds with many current workplace issues: high unemployment rates, job losses due to workforce reductions or technological advances, an increasing compensation gap between skilled and unskilled workers, persistent inequities in job opportunities, and loss of employer and employee loyalty. Yet, Herr (2001) asserts that it is because of these challenges that career development is more relevant than ever:

In these conditions, the practice of career development, among its other outcomes, serves as a mechanism to provide hope to people, the affirmation of their individual dignity and worth, and the support to establish new career directions. Without

Human Resource Development Review Vol. 4, No. 4 December 2005 418-439
DOI: 10.1177/1534484305281006
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feelings of dignity and hope, it is unlikely that any individual can attain his or her full potential as a human being. (P. 207)

This article addresses how career development can be revived in HRD scholarship and practice to benefit organizations and to affirm individual employees. It contributes to HRD career development practice by providing ideas for updating, expanding, and adapting career development endeavors to better fit the era of boundaryless careers, beginning with the role of HRD in connecting career development to organizational strategic plans, making it a systemic process. HRD research will benefit through using the framework provided to examine how systemic factors affect learning activities, explore how boundary-spanning learning events can be incorporated into career development, and determine what outcome measures are most appropriate for tracking the progress of individualized learning.

Theoretical Background

Current career-development definitions vary in focus from the individual to the organization. Some see the concept as having a decidedly individual bent, “an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks” (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk as cited in DeSimone, Werner, & Harris, 2002, p. 458). Van der Sluis and Poell (2003) suggest an influence of an outside source, describing it as “a process of professional growth brought about by work-related learning” (p. 162), where the process apparently could be individually or organizationally driven. Gilley, Egglund, and Gilley (2002) suggest a collaborative effort, stating, “career development is a process requiring individuals and organizations to create a partnership that enhances employees’ knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes required for their current and future job assignments” (p. 94). They go on to emphasize the dual nature of the process noting that it is “a quintessential development activity” because enhanced individual performance contributes to the success of the organization.

These descriptors illustrate the evolutionary nature of career development. As early as 1909, Parsons (1909) touted the importance of merging individual abilities and interests with work requirements through planning and guidance. Parsons is acknowledged as the father of vocational guidance, laying the groundwork for what later would become identified as career development. His work actually spawned different but related approaches. One focuses on career-development theory, dedicated to describing how and when individual vocational decisions are made and career goals determined, encompassing a lifetime of career behavior. The other is a subset of human resource development known as career development that connects career goals with performance by focusing on interventions that match indi-

vidual interests and skills with organizational needs (Herr, 2001; van Dijk, 2004). The latter, organizational context will be the focus here.

The traditional view of organizational career development was grounded in the mindset of making a career within an organization and of predictable, stable jobs. Career planning and management typically meant plotting a course within an organizational system that would yield promotions or increases in responsibility as expertise grew and following that course. The mechanisms to accomplish career goals were often regularly scheduled training programs, job rotation, and perhaps some form of informal mentoring. This perspective was reinforced by popular career development models referencing life stages or phases that followed a linear path throughout the life cycle (Morrison & Hall, 2002). Then things changed. As companies downsized, rightsized, and reconfigured, employees that once had pinned their career plans on advancement within a particular organization began to realize the future of their careers depended on their own initiative, and career planning took on a new dimension. During the mid-1990's a new career lexicon appeared, redefining well-used terms like *career* and *employment* to encompass a broad-based view. So *career* became not just a way to define "hierarchical progression" (p. 29) but a reference to all work experiences, and *employment* expanded to include not just one's place and type of occupation but also a person's employability over time (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). At the same time, new words entered the vocabulary of career development. Hall's (1996) "protean career" captured the individual nature of career progress, driven by the person and evolutionary in nature; rather than fostered by and bound to an organization. Similarly, the "boundaryless career" described work experiences that spanned organizational systems, had credibility outside of one's present employment situation, utilized broad-based networks, and essentially followed the path set by the individual, rather than prescribed by the parameters of an employer (Arthur, 1994).

During this time, the nature of work has changed as well. For example, Forret and Sullivan (2002) describe three major shifts in the transition from organization-based to boundaryless careers. One addresses rewards, noting the change from interest in high salaries and job status to goals defined by personal interests and work-life balance. The second notes a transition from development of organization-specific skills to acquiring transferable skills that can move with the individual as she or he transitions from one system to another. The third tracks a change from loyalty to one's organization to increased professional commitment that yields the potential for a broad-based portable network.

Yet, the value of career development to affirm and guide individuals through career transitions, to enhance organizational loyalty for the time employees are with an organization, to encourage motivation and productivity, and to contribute to the larger structure of economic stability remains

(Boudreaux, 2001; Herr, 2001). Similarly, the literature supports that employees and systems can mutually benefit from the career development process, reinforcing its relevance as a human resource development function (van Dijk, 2004). However, each of these shifts signals the need to reassess how career development can best be accomplished and how the goals of those endeavors can be realigned to meet the needs of organizations as well as individuals. Conlon (2004) reinforces the need for this transition, identifying the paternalistic nature of the traditional employer-employee relationship and describing the current situation as requiring a partnership, involving employer-based "opportunities and tools" (p. 780) for employee development and individually driven career management that uses the opportunities available.

As the focus of career development has evolved from being primarily organizationally based to being individually driven, the traditional implied contract upon which it was based (i.e., preparation for future service to the organization, advancement as reward for enhanced skills) has crumbled. At the same time, career development appears to have lost emphasis in HRD research and practice. It is as if once the old roles no longer held, there was confusion about what to do next. A few researchers have acknowledged this dilemma by noting some general direction for HRD to resume responsibility for career development to maximize the benefits for both individuals and organizations. Short and Opengart (2001) address the importance of HRD changing its traditional career development priorities to address the interests of free agents, employees focused on their own employability rather than on stability within any single organization. Powell, Hubschman, and Doran (2001) reinforce the importance of HRD reframing its connection with career development by embracing informal learning. Doyle (2000) restates the interdependence of employers and employees in the career development process, noting that individual careers are influenced by organizational structures and that employer success depends in part on linking organizational goals with individual aspirations. He notes the changing psychological contract between employee and employer has become more complicated as both groups have declared their independence from one another for the long term, yet find themselves linked for the short term.

The overriding message appears to be that HRD needs to both reclaim and reinvent its involvement in career development. Doyle (2000) sums up the prevailing thought by suggesting that human resources can best reenter the field by relinquishing the outdated focus on controlling what career development is and how it is provided and adopting a broader perspective. This means venturing into uncertain territory, becoming more flexible while maintaining a balance between the needs of the organization and those of the individual employee. This article takes those general recommendations a step further by suggesting a framework for how HRD can respond to both

constituencies, employees and employers, through the career development process.

Career Development: Definitions and Assumptions

Although scholars have defined career development (CD) in a variety of ways, Simonsen's (1997) definition will be used as the foundation for the proposed framework:

Career development is an ongoing process of planning and directed action toward personal work and life goals. Development means growth, continuous acquisition and application of one's skills. Career development is the outcome of the individual's career planning and the organization's provision of support and opportunities, ideally a collaborative process. . . (Simonsen as cited in Simonsen, 1997, pp. 6-7)

This definition recognizes that career development is ongoing, that it involves reciprocal interaction between employee and employer, and that attainment and/or enhancement of individual capabilities are not restricted to a particular job, career path, or organization. This definition and the framework that follows are predicated on a few essential assumptions.

- HRD remains integral to the career-development process. The HRD function is uniquely positioned to integrate the interests of employees with the needs of the system, staying attuned to the strategic plans of the organization while remaining cognizant of the free agent nature of the employer-employee relationship (Boudreaux, 2001; Swanson & Holton, 2001; van Dijk, 2004).

- The return on investment of career development must be considered to gain organizational interest in expanding CD efforts. However, the potential value of career development to organizational success depends on how well the system supports the career development process in terms of resources allotted and priority assigned to career development endeavors. For example, when small systems find their minimal resources stretched, career development may languish so that seemingly more urgent needs, like mandatory training, can be addressed (Kuchinke, 2003). Larger systems simply may choose to focus on more high profile initiatives, like organization development, rather than invest resources in career development in this era of uncertain loyalties. Yet, one of the advantages of less structured learning activities is that they often are embedded within daily work. As a result, they can be implemented with little financial investment while contributing to the success of other endeavors, like organization development.

- Career development should not be restricted to a select few or to those at particular levels within the system. Conlon (2004) addresses this by noting both the practical as well as the ethical aspect of this premise. As organizations become flatter, a broad-based, well-developed workforce will be

essential to meet their current and future needs. Ironically, although the HRD literature has routinely discussed “management development” as separate from “career development,” much of what traditionally has been described as “career development” has targeted managerial-level employees and excluded those in nonmanagement tracks (McDonald, Hite, & Gilbreath, 2002).

- Career development can be both formal and informal and may take place within and outside of the organization. For example, Gilley et al. (2002) describe an “effective career development program” (p. 63) as one that includes a variety of experiences in addition to classroom training, citing for example, “self-directed learning projects and involvement in professional organizations and associations” (p. 63).

- Individual life and work priorities influence choices about careers and development opportunities. In some instances, the choice is one of focusing on intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards to define career success and satisfaction (Forret & Sullivan, 2002). In others, the decision may be based less on a quest for a balanced life and/or work experience and more on necessity. Hite and McDonald (2003) found that women often make career choices based on their family responsibilities, sometimes choosing to curtail their career progress to accommodate family roles and expectations.

A Strategic HRD Framework for Career Development

Most HRD practitioners and scholars would argue that HRD needs to be represented in determining the strategic direction of organizations. Fewer would agree that HRD typically is present at the strategic planning table. However HRD’s presence is critical in determining a company’s role and responsibility regarding employees’ careers. It also is important so career development is not considered a stand-alone program, but rather as a process that is integrated into the system such that it influences the strategic direction of the organization (Gilley et al., 2002). Gutteridge, Leibowitz, and Shore (1993) advocate for companies to incorporate career development into their strategic plans by recommending a systems approach. Specifically, they suggest that career development be viewed as a way of achieving important business objectives and that employee and organizational needs be aligned when planning career-development processes. Hall (2002) reinforces the need for career development endeavors to be “managed and integrated” to yield maximum benefits to individuals and the system (p. 284). Simonsen (1997) echoes the recommendation that career development be “driven by business needs” and proposes that organizations need to develop both a vision and a philosophy of career development (p. 181).

The overarching question at the strategic planning table is as follows: What should the organization’s philosophy be regarding career develop-

ment and how, given today's environment, should this be enacted? Doyle (2000) suggests that a strategy "based on formalized career structures and systems is unlikely to cope with the diversity and 'messiness' that is likely to characterize career management in the future" (p. 239). Rather, a strategy is needed that is sensitive to the contextual elements that influence CD and recognizes the need for innovative ways to learn and develop given the current nature of work and organizations.

HRD practitioners are well positioned to shape a system that is less paternalistic and controlling and that focuses more on the partnership approach that fosters employee self-development while still meeting organizational needs. As the planning evolves from developing a philosophy and determining goals, a framework may help guide professionals as they work to implement and integrate career development into the organization (see Figure 1). We suggest three critical elements to consider in this process: organizational support mechanisms, learning activities, and evaluation processes. The arrows in the figure indicate that each component of the framework will influence and be influenced by the other. For example, the organizational support mechanisms will influence what learning activities are developed and nurtured in the organization. In turn, the learning activities will affect organizational support mechanisms (e.g., networks and community-based learning may assist employees in dealing with work-family conflicts). Organizational support mechanisms will influence what is evaluated regarding CD and how it is evaluated. The evaluation process also should determine if organizational support mechanisms assist employees and the organization in achieving career-development objectives.

Organizational Support Mechanisms

According to Doyle (2000), HR's career-development efforts should focus on "contextual factors and influences that shape career" (p. 240). HRD can make a difference in individuals' careers by attending to important organizational support mechanisms such as fairness and equity, environmental issues, and life-work balance.

Fairness and/or equity issues. Most organizations have concentrated their career development efforts on their upper-echelon employees, primarily those individuals in professional and/or technical and managerial positions (Gutteridge et al., 1993; Leibowitz, Feldman, & Mosley, 1992; McDonald et al., 2002). Yet, there is evidence that some nonexempt, hourly employees do think about their careers and desire more developmental opportunities (McDonald et al., 2002). Both Conlon (2004) and van Dijk (2004) suggest HRD take a stronger stance regarding workplace justice and career-development opportunities for employees at all levels in organizations.

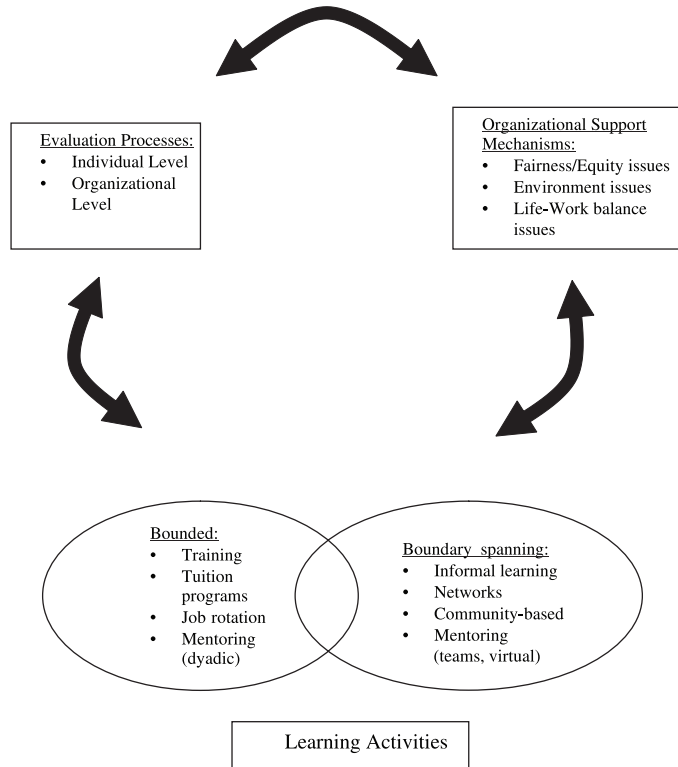


FIGURE 1: A Strategic Human Resource Development Framework for Career Development

As an advocate for inclusive career-development strategies, HRD practitioners should continually ask: Are all employees made aware of developmental opportunities? Do all have access to those opportunities? Are rewards for participation distributed in a fair and equitable manner? Wooten and Cobb (1999) write that fairness issues must always be considered when planning career development:

By its very nature, CD involves basic issues of fairness over the allocation of CD resources, the policies and procedures used to decide who receives them, and the interactions between those who provide and those who not only receive CD rewards but also experience its losses. (P. 173)

Environment issues. Many factors within the work environment have the potential to influence employee career development. London (1983) provides a comprehensive list of potential situational variables that might influence career motivation. Included in his list are issues related to reward structures, organiza-

tional climate, leadership, and job design. For example, HRD can guide the discourse about compensation for development activities. As companies reconsider what rewards and recognition they can realistically provide and what can meet systemic as well as individual needs, Cappelli (1999) suggests that the “employability concept” may be what organizations can best offer to employees. He explains this concept as “we cannot offer you security with our company, but we can help you to secure skills that will help keep you employable, that will lead to some security in the labor market by helping you find other jobs” (pp. 29-30). For some, simply having time off to pursue development opportunities may be enough of an incentive. As workplace demographics diversify, cultural values and priorities also must be considered in this discussion.

Empirical studies indicate that supervisory support has a strong impact on career development (Van der Sluis & Poell, 2003; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999) and career motivation (London, 1993). Supervisory support might include such activities as coaching, advocating, providing performance feedback, serving as a sounding board for career plans, and offering adequate time for development opportunities (London, 1993). Unfortunately, many line managers are ill-equipped to help employees develop their careers (McDougall & Vaughan, 1996). Evidence suggests supervisors still need to be trained to assist in employees’ career development (Wayne et al., 1999) and to be rewarded for those efforts. HRD can support supervisors in this and in other endeavors, such as helping supervisors develop a greater awareness of the multiple ways they affect issues of fairness and equity. One example would be building awareness that supervisors often serve as the gateway to employees’ access to development opportunities. In addition, HRD can help educate supervisors regarding work-life balance issues and how they can assist employees in dealing with these concerns.

Life-work balance issues. Work-family (w-f) issues have established a presence in the career-development literature (e.g., Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Powell & Mainiero, 1992). Research clearly indicates that work-family concerns have a large impact on individual satisfaction, as illustrated by a meta-analysis of the research that reveals a consistent “negative relationship between all types of w-f conflict and job and life satisfaction” (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, p. 145). Martins et al. (2002) note that work-family conflicts are significantly related to women’s career satisfaction. Several studies suggest that work-family conflicts play an important role in career choices, aspirations, and patterns—particularly in regards to women’s careers (e.g., Eccles, 1994; Erwin & Stewart, 1997; Hite & McDonald, 2003).

Clearly work-family balance needs to be on every organization’s agenda, particularly when focusing on performance and career development. Polach (2003) indicates that work-life integration is an “organizational effective-

ness issue” in which HRD can “play a key role” (p. 64). An obvious way HRD can have an impact is in advocating for work-family benefits that meet the variety of needs likely to be found in any given organization. For example, HR practitioners must remain cognizant of fairness perceptions regarding w-f benefits. Parker and Allen (2001) report that women in their study perceive work and/or family benefits as more fair than males, and employees with younger children (e.g., living at home) view work and/or family benefits more positively because they might gain more from those benefits.

Perhaps more important, HRD practitioners can assist in building networks and structures within their organizations that can provide socioemotional support for those experiencing w-f conflicts. Martins et al. (2002) examine factors that moderate the relationship between w-f conflict and career satisfaction. Two of their findings have implications for HRD. First, they note that being in the minority gender of one’s work group reduces the availability of a supportive network of coworkers. Secondly, they reveal that strong ties to one’s community can lessen the impact of w-f conflict because of the strong socioemotional support individuals often receive from these ties. HRD can address these points through nontraditional learning activities that help to build connections.

Learning Activities

Traditionally, HRD’s contribution to career development has been through formalized programs such as training, mentoring, tuition reimbursement, job posting, and career-planning workshops. Although these types of programs will continue to be important in developing some individuals’ careers, the reality is that many organizations do not have the resources or the time to offer numerous formalized programs. We refer to these as “bounded” activities because access to and availability of these events is contingent on the organization’s ability and willingness to offer them. These bounded options have been discussed at length elsewhere, so while they are recognized as viable learning events, the focus of this discussion will be on less traditional, less formalized (boundary-spanning) learning opportunities.

In Figure 1, a Venn diagram is used to illustrate that these bounded and “boundary-spanning” activities may overlap and be used in conjunction with each other to support the organization’s career-development efforts. Specifically, four learning activities are highlighted and recommended as alternative ways of developing employees’ careers: informal learning, networks, community involvement, and alternative forms of mentoring.

Increasingly, scholars are focusing on “boundary-spanning” activities like informal learning as an alternative means of career development (Conlon, 2004; van Dijk, 2004). As Powell et al. (2001) write, “Currently, with the organizational community facing reorganization, downsizing and

the constant evolving of job descriptions and roles, formal learning, implemented usually through training classes and workshops is diminishing; informal learning has become the mindset" (p. 823). Hall (2002) concurs, noting that "the natural resources" within the organization offer quick, cost-effective career-development activities that reinforce the business strategy and promote learning through day-to-day work (p. 283).

Powell et al. (2001) present a model to illustrate the role informal learning can take in "re-creating career development" (p. 825). In their model, HRD plays a critical role in facilitating the "LEARNING HOW" level of the experience, which involves reflection and critical thinking about the learning and in the "LEARNING WHY" level, which involves integrating "the original learning experience into both professional and personal aspects of their lives" (p. 825). According to Powell et al. (2001), the learner who gets to the "LEARNING WHY" level will have greater self-efficacy, hence improved performance, and will consequently set more challenging career goals.

Another potential boundary-spanning activity to support career-development efforts is developing informal and/or formal networks for employees both within and outside their work environments. For example, Forret and Sullivan (2002) recommend individuals develop and take advantage of networking opportunities within the organization, the profession, and the community. However, many networking opportunities, particularly informal ones, are not readily available to minority professionals and managers (Combs, 2003; Ibarra, 1993). In addition, nonexempt employees often find themselves excluded from informal and formal networks, despite some evidence that hourly employees see strong benefits in networking and desire such opportunities (McDonald et al., 2002). Networks can serve multiple purposes, such as providing socioemotional support as employees attempt to balance life-work issues (Martins et al., 2002) and facilitating knowledge acquisition (Friedman, 1996). Networking also has been positively linked to perceived career success and marketability (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

These results indicate organizations should play an active role in promoting networking opportunities for employees. Among the benefits the organization may derive from this activity includes a strong "knowledge base within the company" and an increase in "cross-fertilization of ideas and information across business units and departments" (Eby et al., 2003, p. 704). Martins et al. (2002) suggest that organizations might create "organization-wide networking groups" to provide social support for individuals in the minority gender in their work groups, as well as encourage employees to develop stronger ties to their communities (p. 407). HRD can play a valuable role in advocating the benefits of networks to upper management, offering expertise and/or assistance in facilitating such groups, providing information on how to set them up, and monitoring their effectiveness.

Following Martins et al. (2002) observation, the third boundary-spanning activity suggested is community involvement. In today's corporate environment, employees often recognize the need to develop their careers beyond the walls of corporate America. Serving on community boards, volunteering in nonprofit organizations, and assisting in community events can develop skills as well as provide additional networking opportunities and socioemotional support (Martins et al., 2002; McDonald et al., 2002). Organizations benefit as well from the skills, knowledge, and confidence employees gain from participating in these activities. Again, HRD can take the lead in encouraging volunteerism, acting as a resource for employees wanting to become more involved in their communities, and advocating for flexible work schedules so employees can engage in such activities.

Finally, alternative forms of mentoring should be considered as examples of boundary-spanning activities. The literature on traditional dyadic mentoring relationships has documented the various benefits individuals derive from having a mentor. These benefits include increased career satisfaction and success as well as psychosocial support (Kram, 1985). However, too often this important career development activity is available only to a select few. Kram and Isabella (1985) found, 20 years ago, that peer relationships offer an alternative to conventional mentoring, often are more available, and typically are longer in duration than traditional mentoring relationships. More recently, scholars and practitioners have suggested other forms of mentoring such as mentor networks (de Janasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003), group or team mentoring (Dansky, 1996; Mitchell, 1999), and virtual or e-mentoring (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Hamilton & Scandura, 2002). Various benefits of these alternative forms have been noted, such as reducing the number of mentors needed and creating more opportunities to access more diverse mentors (de Janasz et al., 2003; Hamilton & Scandura, 2002); providing more flexible developmental opportunities for individuals telecommuting, working in remote sites, or with work-life balance conflicts (de Janasz et al., 2003; Hamilton & Scandura, 2002); and making mentoring more accessible and egalitarian (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Mueller, 2004).

HRD's involvement in these alternative forms of mentoring will vary depending on the resources the organization is willing to commit to these activities. Organizations planning to offer these developmental activities will need HRD's involvement in connecting individuals and/or groups and providing training and coaching to mentors and participants. If group or team mentoring is employed, HRD practitioners may be asked to help facilitate these teams. Some organizations will not have the resources to fully implement these mentoring activities. In these cases, HRD practitioners should be aware of potential ways employees might become involved in mentoring outside of the work setting.

These boundary-spanning activities typically require fewer organizational resources than more traditional bounded-development initiatives.

However, they have the potential to be very effective in meeting the needs of employees in turbulent organizational environments for two major reasons. First, these activities may expand individuals' perspectives of what a career can involve. For example, networking and community involvement may help employees better understand the multiple facets of how work and life intersect. Second, these initiatives may help individuals develop new and different skill sets, increasing resiliency and employability. Together they respond to employee needs and interests in the age of the protean career (see Table 1).

Evaluation Processes

As with many HRD endeavors, few organizations do a thorough job of evaluating their career-development efforts. Gutteridge et al. (1993), in their survey of organizations' career-development practices, found few companies evaluate their career-development initiatives in any systematic way. The majority (64%) relied on "informal verbal feedback" as the means of assessing their CD practices (p. 25). Reviews of the career-development literature also conclude there is a lack of research on interventions and the impact of those interventions (Dagley & Salter, 2004). Evaluating CD becomes increasingly complex and difficult given this messy, turbulent environment and the inherent challenges in capturing and measuring unstructured learning events. However, evaluation is a critical component of the career-development process, and HRD has a role in advocating both individual and organization levels of evaluation, although the levels are not mutually exclusive and may overlap considerably.

Individual level. Hall (2002) discusses four major criteria to explain career effectiveness: tangible signs of success (e.g., objective measures like salary, promotions), attitudes about one's career (e.g., subjective measures), adaptability, and identity (e.g., life integration). Hall suggests that the first two criteria have a short-term focus, while "identity and adaptability have a long-term orientation" (p. 133). The long-term perspective is more relevant to the boundaryless career concept and the reality of flatter organizations. However, adopting that focus will mean exploring new ways to measure and track individual career success. Sullivan, Martin, Carden, and Mainiero (2003) recommend adopting "a broader definition of career success" because it may help "reduce dissatisfaction and enhance an employee's positive attitude toward the firm" (p. 41). For example, Van der Sluis and Poell (2003) propose that employability and life satisfaction may be used as "indicators of career success" (p. 176). Herr (2001) suggests that dealing with all forms of change and being "career resilient" will become increasingly important to career development in the 21st century (p. 208). Devising methods to capture such intangible factors as adaptability, identity, employability, resiliency, and life and/or career satis-

TABLE 1: Summary of Boundary-Spanning Learning Activities

<i>Learning Activity^a</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Advantages/Disadvantages</i>	<i>HRD's Role</i>
Informal	Unstructured and experiential learning that is "integrated into people's daily work and routines" (Marsick & Volpe, 1999, p. 4)	Work in teams; on-the-job training; interactions with customers, peers, supervisors; job duties; meetings	+ naturally occurring on the job, therefore extra resources not needed - may not recognize that learning is occurring and how this learning can enhance one's career (integrating it into personal and professional life)	Assist in developing a culture that values informal learning Facilitate the reflection process – what was learned, why it was learned, how this learning can enhance one's career
Networks	Groups of individuals who have the capacity to help navigate career/work/life issues	Informal and formal; external and internal; trade or professional associations, internal committee assignments, community organizations	+ helpful in handling work-life balance issues; few organizational resources needed to implement - limited access to nonmanagerial/nonexecutive/underrepresented employees; flextime needed for some network opportunities	Advocate for flextime so all employees can be involved in networks Assist in developing and facilitating internal networks to meet employee needs Serve as a resource bank regarding external networking opportunities

(continued)

TABLE I (continued)

<i>Learning Activity^a</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Advantages/Disadvantages</i>	<i>HRD's Role</i>
Community-based	Developing skills, knowledge, and abilities through community work	Volunteer for community groups/agencies, serve on nonprofit boards, participate in community events	+ does not rely on organizational resources to implement; enhances organizations' social responsibility image - flexitime needed for some volunteer work	Advocate for flexitime so all employees can be involved in volunteer efforts Serve as a resource bank regarding community-based opportunities
Alternative forms of mentoring ^b	A relatively long-term relationship typically between more experienced and less experienced individuals for the purpose of providing career guidance and psychosocial support	Virtual, electronic, or cybermentoring; group and peer mentoring; mentoring networks	+ increases potential number and diversity of mentors; more accessible to various employee groups; better accommodates those with time constraints; relatively cost-efficient in terms of resources	Assist with training/selection/support for mentors and protégés if program is offered internally Provide resource information for those interested in alternative forms of mentoring

- technology needed to participate in virtual forms; organization may have less ability to monitor the mentoring relationship

a. There is overlap between some of these learning activities, particularly networks and community-based learning. For example, Forret and Sullivan (2002) include networking in the community as one of the three networking domains they discuss. It is listed as a separate learning activity here to differentiate community-based learning as a means of developing KSAs as well as a way to develop networks.

b. D'Abate, Eddy, and Tannenbaum (2003) discuss the conceptual confusion surrounding some developmental initiatives such as mentoring. Because we are advocating a variety of alternative methods of mentoring, defining this learning activity becomes more problematic. Specific definitions of these alternative forms are provided by Ambrose (2003); peer/team mentoring and mentoring circles), Hamilton and Scandura (2002); e-mentoring), and de Janasz et al. (2003; mentor networks).

faction in measurable formats will require tracking employees to examine long-term career opportunities, paths, and choices, remaining cognizant that individuals may change their goals over time to fit their own definitions of career success and satisfaction. HRD practitioners will need to be creative as well as practical in determining how best to assess this aspect of career development.

Organization level. The strategic direction of career development will help determine the evaluation processes used to assess the impact of CD on the organizational system (Simonsen, 1997). Although differing CD goals will result in varied assessment criteria and means of implementation, Swanson and Holton (1999) reinforce that organizational processes typically are assessed “in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency, and bottom-line contributions” (p. 7). Often, the focus seems to rest on the financial aspect of this combination, the return on investment. While acknowledging understandable interest in ROI among organizational leaders, Russ-Eft and Preskill (2005) caution that it is not always the most effective method of evaluation. Instead of making that choice by default, they advise carefully focusing the evaluation to select the best fit between method and assessment goals. Cascio (2000) reinforces this approach, observing that the current knowledge-based economy has given rise to organizational assets like intellectual capital that are not readily represented by traditional financial measurements. This change in criteria for organizational success requires a broader-based perspective of what should be measured and how.

Traditionally, organizations have expected career-development efforts to improve performance, increase retention, create a loyal and committed workforce, and support an effective succession plan (Gilley et al., 2002). Although some of these indicators still may be used, other criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of CD need to be considered. For example, workforce flexibility and employees who innovate and initiate change may have an important impact on organizational effectiveness (Prince, 2003). Establishing new measurements, based on the realities of today’s organizations, and determining the mechanisms to assess effectiveness, fall within HRD’s responsibility. In determining appropriate measurements, Swanson and Holton (1999) emphasize the importance of front-end analysis that determines clear goals to anchor the assessment, an important starting point for HRD’s strategic involvement in the CD process. Like Swanson and Holton, Cascio (2000) advocates basing measurements on expected results, for example, using tenure and turnover rates to determine if the organization is losing knowledge “inventory” (p. 12) or comparing the percentage of revenue from new products as one measure of innovation. The key is accurately identifying how the system defines successful career-development outcomes, designing assessment processes to tap those criteria, and collecting baseline data (Simonsen, 1997). It is valuable to recognize too that many boundary-spanning, informal learning activities that best fit individ-

ual CD needs already are part of day-to day workplace operations (Hall, 2002), yielding a potential cost advantage over more traditional career-development initiatives.

In addition to tracking cost-effective outcomes, career-development assessments also should include ongoing examination of the organizational-support mechanisms that are a critical part of a successful systemic CD effort. How do employees perceive development opportunities in terms of fairness? Are work-family conflicts interfering with employees' ability to participate in career development? Do supervisors help or hinder career-development efforts within the organization? Swanson and Holton (1999) make the distinction between outcome results and perception data, but note that the latter are important and that "HRD professionals should be in the forefront of responsibly collecting and reporting perception data" (p. 157). Although perceptual assessments suffer from the limitations of most self-report data, careful structuring and use of observation material from other stakeholders can boost their potential accuracy (Swanson & Holton, 1999). Gathering perceptual data is particularly important to help determine potential strengths and weaknesses in informal career-development options and to keep the balance between systemic and employee needs and interests.

Implications and Future Directions

Although the focus and function of career development has evolved over time from set training and education programs to encompass more broad-based learning, HRD still has an important role to play in the process. It is a role that requires a wider range of skills from the HRD practitioner and a mindset open to innovation and change. It actually is a natural progression. Just as employers have turned to HRD to achieve strategic goals through organization development and performance-improvement initiatives, a renewed effort toward career development can contribute to organizational effectiveness. Similarly, a redirected focus on the individual nature of career development returns HRD to its roots of focusing on the needs of employees. Additional efforts on the part of HRD practitioners and researchers are needed to make this transition a successful one.

Practitioners

Arguably, the most critical step for HRD practitioners in this process is to claim a place at the strategic planning table and make the case for the importance of career development that addresses the priorities of employees and employers. The link between individual development and the strategic goals of the organization is key to gaining systemic support for career development and for meeting the needs of both employee and employer in this free-agent career era (Simonsen, 1997). The strategic connection also can be

used to advocate for equity in access to career development, because broadening the base of CD recipients will yield a better prepared workforce to fulfill organizational goals.

Practitioners also need to redirect HRD career-development efforts away from static program offerings to a more flexible, open, on and off the job development model that recognizes the myriad possibilities to build skills and knowledge (Hall, 2002). To accomplish this, practitioners must challenge themselves to move away from the relative safety of prescribed programming and to enhance their own skills in coaching and reflective learning to address new modes of career development. Finally, practitioners can strengthen the case for renewed interest in career development by seeking out ways to measure and evaluate career-development contributions at both individual and organizational levels (Hall, 2002).

Researchers

Research is key to the revival and redirection of career development. Yet, evidence suggests that the topic of career development has been neglected in recent human resource development literature (Boudreaux, 2001; Powell et al., 2001; van Dijk, 2004). This dearth of research material combined with changes in the nature of careers and new insights into what career development encompasses yields plentiful opportunities for study. For example, the reality of boundaryless careers opens new avenues of research regarding what encompasses career success and satisfaction, and how organizations should evaluate career development outcomes for organizations and individuals, including financial return on investment and perceptions of the process (Boudreaux, 2001). Similarly, more empirical studies focused on dynamic learning opportunities are needed; first to explore their effectiveness in enhancing both performance and development (Powell et al., 2001; van Dijk, 2004). Second, to determine how boundaryless learning activities can be systematized enough to contribute to the organizational career development endeavor without jeopardizing their unstructured and dynamic attributes (Hall, 2002). Because learning experiences that incorporate day-to-day operations into career development can benefit organizations of any size, a focus on unstructured learning increases the options for studying development initiatives in small systems, often overlooked in HRD research (Kuchinke, 2003). Other potential areas for study relate to the fairness and equity aspect of career development for a more diverse workforce. Possibilities include the influence of work-family issues on career opportunities (Martins et al., 2002) and the career development of nonmanagerial employees, a group increasingly called upon to take on additional responsibilities but often neglected in past research on career development (Conlon, 2004; McDonald et al., 2002).

This article has focused on how HRD can renew its commitment to career development as one of its fundamental functions. Whether the absence of HRD in career-development discourse and practice has been the result of uncertainty of what to do or the misassumption that there was nothing to be done, it is time that HRD revise and reassert its role in making career development viable again. The framework and recommendations provided urge a new perspective for HRD practitioners and researchers, one that is flexible, reflective, valuable for organizations and affirming for individuals. As HRD transitions from the traditional program delivery stance to more interactive roles as facilitative resource, employee and employer liaison, and coach, it can enhance and reclaim the relevance of career development.

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