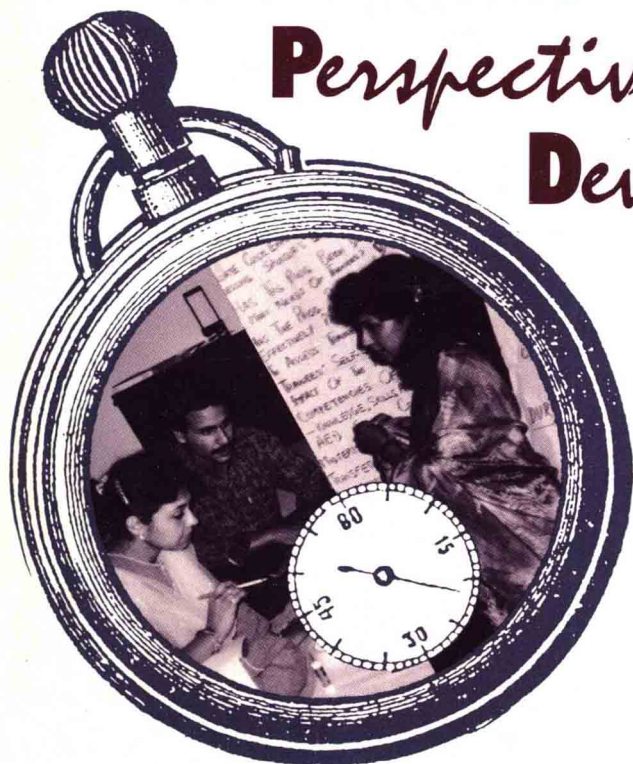


HRD

International Perspectives on Development and Learning



Editors

**MERRICK JONES
PETE MANN**



KUMARIAN PRESS

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Professor Reg Revans, who continues to promote action learning for development in the 1990s and whose influence is apparent in many of our chapters. The editors and study fellows at Manchester, as well as managers and trainers from around the world have access to Revans's ideas through his continued writing and teaching. By driving home the undeniable assertion that in human resources development formal training and teachers are "necessary but insufficient," Reg Revans opens us all to the truth of fresh experience.

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Introduction

This book had its genesis in two international conferences in England in the summer of 1989. The first was hosted by our own Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM) at the University of Manchester and was called "People and Performance: Managing Development in the 1990s." The geographic spread of the delegates—160 from 40 countries—and the range of their disciplines and employing organizations underscored the importance attached to the variety of new interpretations of and biases in the meaning of human resources development (HRD).

The week after saw the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO) in London. The theme of the London conference was "Learning and Living," and it was hosted by the U.K. Institute of Training and Development (ITD), the national HRD forum in Great Britain. The interplay between government and HRD provision, in the light of the changing international political economy, was a prevalent theme and continues to be so into the 1990s.

Naturally a number of views and positions were reflected at both conferences, but one in particular recurred: In contrast to earlier accepted wisdom, there was a strong insistence that HRD does *not* equal training. Complementing this core assumption was an equally persistent focus on learning for development, not just on training for development.

As educators interested in the continuing development of adults, especially in a global context, we welcome these trends. In our work at Manchester University and throughout the world with government officials and practicing managers, an emphasis on the relationship between learning and development has always been a starting point. We have not always been sure how explicit that starting point might become in practice. Will it be different, for example, when we work with district commissioners implementing administrative reform in Kenya from when we work with development bankers integrating HRD into changing performance requirements in India? The complexities in theory and practice of this relationship between development and learning unfold in this book. This fundamental question, frequently posed without prompting from us, has absorbed nearly all our contributors.

For those of us engaged in HRD in the 1990s, the decade promises a

challenging and exciting time. We can expect confusion, ignorance, and doubt as well as intensity. Pressure for certainty and answers will continue to be high. The need for change and adaptation remains pervasive. The customer for HRD will demand from its provider results that make a difference. The key HRD providers—practitioners, managers, and administrators of HRD operations as well as students of the subject—will be called upon to demonstrate that their interventions can make a discernible impact on individual and corporate competence. This sourcebook has these key people in mind in thesis that HRD transcends training.

One aim of this book is to bridge the historical gap in expectations between HRD consumer and provider—a gap accentuated by the narrow thinking that HRD equals training. It is a gap for which HRD professionals hold as much responsibility as non-HRD specialists.

A second historical gap—poor communication between clients and purveyors of HRD—is aggravated through imprecise language. Both stakeholders rely upon certain HRD terms to communicate their respective positions. But in the eyes of HRD specialists, managers frequently describe what they want from HRD too simplistically, and in the managers' view, HRD practitioners rely too much on jargon to justify their efforts. HRD is about differences in performance, and useful language in HRD helps specify those differences. Credible HRD practice, therefore, educates all key parties to differentiate and assess sustainable impacts on performance in terms commonly understood.

After that hectic summer of papers and meetings on HRD back in 1989, it seemed to us that there was a need to make the common understandings emerging from the conferences available to a wider audience. This book is the result. In addition to including papers presented at the two conferences, we sought contributions from other competent HRD professionals around the world, with a bias toward practitioners. Some contributors write about national phenomena. Others, with international experience, write from a more transnational rather than country-specific stance.

The selection of papers, we believe, reflects priorities for the 1990s in that they focus on change and on sustaining improvements; they deal with recurrent requirements in HRD; and they offer an international range of perspectives. Significantly, none of the contributors assume that formal, institutionally based training courses are alone sufficient to meet the demands for competent work performance in contemporary organizations. None of the authors would deny that formal training has a contribution to make, for example, in enhancing current knowledge. But the assembled contributors readily concede that current knowledge is simply not enough in today's changing world. The danger is that such training, focusing solely on what is known and isolated from the world of work, can set in motion other variables detrimental to sound HRD. The effect can be unintended consequences of enjoined themes: the first, that HRD

equals training; and the second, that training equals delivering current knowledge. We view these two themes as outdated.

Such limited ways of approaching the development of human resources affect the credibility of HRD in organizations. They similarly impair the sustained contribution of non-HRD specialists. These twin costs offset proper deployment of the competence of HRD specialists and restrict the implementation, within organizations, of new systems that would enable learning to take place. Learning is a natural process, indispensable in our daily engagement with the world. As the whole purpose of HRD, it becomes inverted within the organization when subcontracted out of the point of its application, the actual workplace. Restricted HRD practices like these assume that a teacher is indispensable to make learning happen.

Many of the contributions in this text explore and challenge these kinds of assumptions and concerns. Much of the contention behind these arguments can be reduced to the overarching view worldwide that formal training is necessary but not sufficient, and that teachers can be helpful but not essential precursors for learning.

This perspective and our phrasing of it above reflect a major influence behind our own career development in management education. It is the influence of Professor R. W. Revans, the steadfast proponent of the philosophy of continuing adult development called action learning, to whom the present work is dedicated. The thinking of Reg Revans has for half a century challenged the assumptions of any manager, practitioner or student of HRD about the nature of the relationship between learning and development. Evidence of that unrelenting influence is the launching by our own institute of the first international action learning programs for postgraduate awards at a British university, Manchester's new MA in corporate and institutional development.

This, then, is not a book about training, although many of its readers—like its editors—may be known as trainers. Through reading this book, professionals, managers, and students of HRD will appreciate that distinction. It is hoped that a global view of learning for development can support these readers' efforts in contributing to sustainable performance improvement in their organizations in the 1990s.

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Part I

HRD: Providing It

