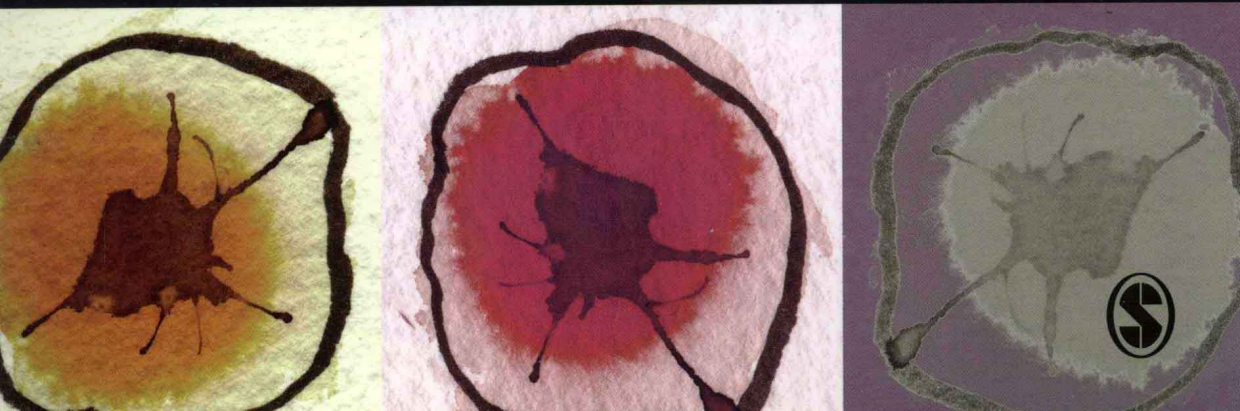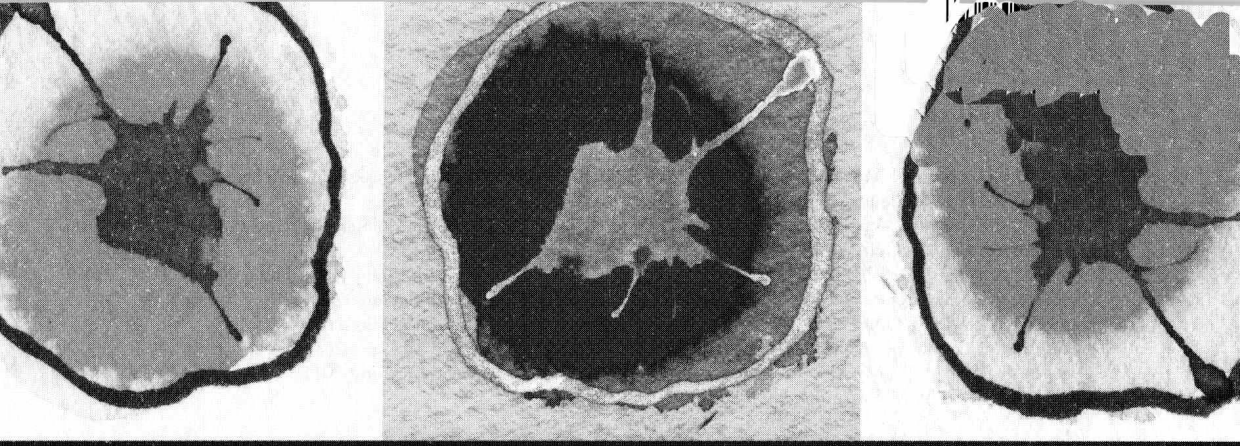# Human Resource Development

theory & practice
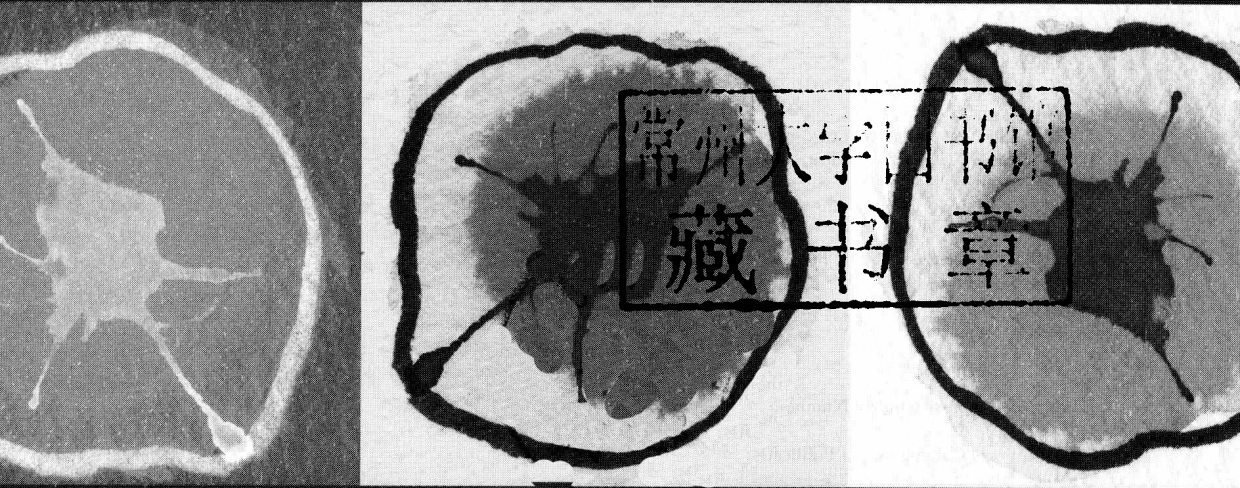
David McGuire and Kenneth Mølbjerg Jørgensen

Human Resource Development

Development

Theory and Practice

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Peter Cleary, PhD lectures in Management Accounting and Financial Accounting at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland at undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education levels. A graduate of UCC, Peter has worked for organisations in accounting roles in both Ireland and the USA. He completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of Limerick (UL), Ireland in 2007 which focused on the relationship between Management Accounting and Intellectual Capital in the Irish Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. His other research interests include: the role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in e-business, corporate governance in Irish ICT firms and employee stock-options in knowledge-intensive firms. Peter has published his research findings in a range of international journals including the *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, the *International Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Performance Evaluation* and the *Journal of Human Resource Costing and Accounting*. Furthermore, Peter has also presented papers at both national and international conferences. A qualified Chartered Management Accountant (CIMA), Peter is currently the Academic Course Director for the BSc (Accounting) degree programme at UCC. His email address is: p.cleary@ucc.ie.

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Acknowledgements

Preface

David McGuire

Human resource development (HRD) is an evolving, dynamic, ever-changing field. It is shaped by the global environment and the people and organisations that work within it. To comprehensively capture the field of HRD within the confines of one book is an impossible task – so herewith is a snapshot of the field, opening up to you, the reader, opportunities and possibilities for further investigation and research.

This textbook seeks to introduce readers to the key debates and challenges within the field of HRD. It aims to cover the important aspects of the field and provide a useful synthesis of research across 14 disciplinary areas. While the textbook is principally oriented towards research and a critical viewpoint, there is much within the text to satisfy the interests of practitioners. To this end, the textbook should inform evidence-based practice and offers up a menu of possibilities for advancing organisational practice.

Chapter 1 sets out to unearth the foundations of human resource development. It traces the origins of HRD and looks at the early struggles to clearly define and demarcate the field. In doing so, it explores the multidisciplinary nature of the field and examines differences in emphasis between the US and Europe. It identifies the practical challenges facing the field and identifies the need for HRD to develop its empirical base as well as providing practitioners with useful tools to strengthen the competitiveness of organisations. Finally, the chapter discusses critical dimensions of HRD – a theme that is followed up in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 examines one of the core aspects of human resource development – namely training and development. Rather than review a range of training interventions in isolation, this chapter seeks to compare a selection of commonly used interventions across eight separate training dimensions: learning theory; knowledge-skills mix; training transferability; degree of learner involvement; locus of initiation; degree of reflection; individual/social interaction and cost. This approach is designed to help practitioners make a more informed choice in their selection of training interventions.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on training evaluation. It assesses the core function of evaluation as one of understanding cause-and-effect in making more effective organisational decisions. It briefly considers evaluation from ontological and epistemological perspectives and moves on to look at commonly used evaluation models in

the literature. The final two sections of the chapter examine the concepts of bench-marking and the balanced scorecard and highlights the value of these approaches to practitioners.

Chapter 4 embarks upon an analysis of the role of HRD in performance management. It investigates the emergence of strategic HRD and the adoption of competency-based approaches to managing learning and development in organisations. It then looks at the role of line managers and assesses the range of responsibilities falling upon line manager shoulders in downsized and devolved organisations. The chapter then briefly examines the three concepts of coaching, mentoring and employee counselling before exploring how leaders can positively affect the performance management process.

Chapter 5 looks at the under-researched area of human resource accounting. It seeks to address the question of how one can accurately assess the value of employee contribution and reflect it in an organisation's balance sheet. The chapter looks at the origins of the human resource accounting movement and identifies the challenges associated with valuing intangible assets in today's knowledge economy. It reviews recent developments in the area of financial accounting, including the introduction of International Accounting Standards for public firms operating in the European Union in 2005. It also looks at how intellectual capital contributions are captured in management accounting terms and issues a challenge to the accountancy profession to do more in collecting and reporting on the value and contribution of intangible assets, lest the accountancy function lose its privileged status as a primary information provider within organisations.

Chapter 6 recognises the importance of creativity in human resource development. It examines barriers to employee creativity in the workplace and outlines a framework for fostering creativity around the three dimensions of positionality, perspective and perception. Positionality considers the situatedness of creativity and its connectedness to individual identity and historic and cultural context. Perspective acknowledges that creativity is an outcome of one's cognitive style, experiences and risk-taking disposition, while perception sees creativity as being influenced by the work environment, level of leader support and employee motivation. The chapter concludes that further research needs to focus on how to empower employee creativity and investigate group and team creativity in more depth.

Chapter 7 explores how adults learn. It provides a synopsis of the three key schools of learning, namely cognitivism, behaviourism and humanism. It reviews the key tenets underpinning each of the three schools, examining the learning and development implications that emerge. The final section examines critical theory approaches to learning and critiques the role of individuals, educationalists and professional bodies in the learning process.

Chapter 8 covers workplace learning and its contribution to human resource development goals in the workplace. Through the use of a specific case study, the authors identify and discuss the challenges involved in work-based learning and embedding such learning within new practices and processes. It examines the need for workplace learning to engage with the organisational environment and to recognise the learning needs and preferences of participants. This chapter also examines differences between organisational learning and organisational development as well as exploring links to lifelong learning and continuing education.

Chapter 9 examines the relationship between organisation learning and HRD. In particular, the chapter argues that organisational learning is often constructed through

designed dialogues. It suggests that language provides a medium for the construction of experience allowing individuals to shape and be shaped by organisational forces. Systems approaches, situated learning and communities of practices are explored as perspectives on organisational learning. The chapter concludes that organisational learning provides an important nexus for linking organisational development and individual learning.

Chapter 10 analyses the links between organisational development and HRD. Using the vehicle of a case example, the chapter explores the nature of organisational culture and the processes, images, symbols and rituals that define the shared beliefs and values of organisational members. It highlights the central importance of understanding organisational culture before embarking on widespread organisational change. It concludes that organisational development can often be a painful and difficult process requiring both time and resources to be successful and that cultural change should take precedent over structural change.

Chapter 11 discusses the issue of identity and HRD. It follows on the discussion from Chapter 10 and looks at experience as polyphonic, plural, multilayered and fragmented. The chapter argues that the multiplicity of language is a source of continuous challenge to rational management concepts which can be counterpointed and brought to order by strong organisational narratives. Identity thus becomes an issue of projection, which is the outcome of a learning process. In this sense, the human experience (and the learning derived from it) is described as always being inter-subjective, plural, ambiguous, open-ended and emergent. Such issues become important in relation to HRD and organisational development initiatives. Employee involvement in change programmes allows integration of new values and processes with existing professional identities and values of employees – thus, if employees are to own change initiatives, they need to understand, accept and embed the logic behind such change.

Chapter 12 challenges the linear simplistic logic underpinning strategy formation in a chapter entitled 'Futures and Strategic Learning'. It argues that complex organisations demand complexity in strategy formulation to ensure plural, inconsistent and contradictory demands and goals. It also maintains that core competencies are not static entities, but ones which must continuously develop and change to meet and satisfy market trends and challenges. The chapter examines relations between narrative, strategy and learning and looks at the importance of reflective and reflexive learning in determining the future direction of the organisation.

Chapter 13 provides a synthesis of the literature on leadership development. The chapter reviews research on four prominent leadership approaches (trait, behavioural, contingency, transformational) looking specifically at the developmental implications flowing from each leadership approach. The chapter argues that to date, much discussion on leadership theories has clearly distinguished various traits and characteristics that effective leaders need to have, but has provided little detail on how such traits and characteristics should be developed. The chapter concludes that leadership remains an elusive concept, being shaped and affected by a range of forces. In turn, leadership development is thus a complex process necessitating leadership development consultants to work across all four leadership approaches in developing and delivering well-rounded and effective interventions.

Chapter 14 recognises the importance of diversity issues in HRD. For too long, the field of HRD has neglected employee differences and this chapter provides a useful commentary on the role that HRD can adopt as a diversity champion in the

workplace. In particular, the chapter explores the obstacles faced by employees arising from their gender, race or sexuality and identifies interventions that can be used to promote openness to diversity in the workplace.

Chapter 15 focuses on the emerging field of international HRD. It examines the cross-cultural applicability of HRD concepts and how HRD interventions can be usefully exported across national boundaries. It presents a framework for examining international HRD, identifying four separate phases in the internationalisation process (multi-domestic, international, multinational and transnational). For each phase, the framework explores the characteristics of the organisation under the headings of structural issues; cultural issues and HRD issues. The chapter concludes that HRD has an important role to play in the internationalisation process and in ensuring the maximisation of organisational efficiencies.

Chapter 16 presents some concluding thoughts on the state of the field of HRD. It identifies six grand narratives (definitional; training; performance; learning; identity and international) as shaping research and practice within the field. It argues that HRD is in a constant state of evolution, responding to organisational and environmental change. It identifies a need for the field to develop its empirical base and to continue to foster dynamism and promote diversity of thought.

In conclusion, human resource development is a powerful tool empowering individuals, organisations and societies to compete effectively in a global marketplace. It harnesses the latent capabilities of individuals helping them achieve real progress in the organisations, communities and societies where they live. In so doing, HRD practitioners through the application of their skills and talents can make a real difference to the lives of people across the world.

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