

Human Resource Development and Society: Human Resource Development's Role in Embedding Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, and Ethics in Organizations

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Abstract

Human resource development (HRD) is increasingly expected to play a facilitative role in corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and ethics in organizations. However, there is also significant skepticism concerning HRD's ability to make a contribution to these areas. It is criticized for moving away from its mission to advocate humanistic values in organizations to totally embracing a short-term business agenda. This article argues that societal HRD (SHRD) can make an important and long-lasting contribution to CSR, sustainability, and ethics through its capacity to question a continual focus by organizations on efficiency and performance. However, it must also be conscious of its business role. Both objectives must be pursued side-by-side. The article outlines a framework of activities that HRD may use to reorient the agenda, hold organizations accountable, provide leadership on CSR, sustainability, and ethics, and at the same time ensure that the organization is profitable and successful. The article summarizes the six articles that are included in this issue.

Keywords

societal HRD, sustainability, corporate social responsibility

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We live in a world where the expectations placed on corporations, governments, and institutions have changed dramatically in the last decade. There is a growing expectation that organizations will focus on social, environmental, and economic goals in addition to ensuring profitability (Matten & Moon, 2008; Sharma & Henriques, 2005). Organizations are expected to move away from a single bottom-line philosophy to undertake roles traditionally considered to be beyond the scope of profit-making organizations. Some of these roles include championing human rights, climate change, and environmental protection, adopting green work practices, helping to eliminate world hunger and illiteracy, supporting education, and ensuring involvement in the community (Brammer & Millington, 2009; Davies & Crane, 2010; Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Schramm, 2007).

Increasingly, human resource development (HRD) is viewed as having a role in helping organizations achieve societal, environmental, and economic goals. HRD has emerged from within two distinct traditions: one that is functionalist and emphasizes performance and the other that emphasizes human learning and development. Yorks (2005) has challenged the field to look beyond the performance versus development dichotomy and implement activities that encourage both objectives. Societal HRD (SHRD) has traditionally focused on the need to contribute to an organization's strategic needs and requirements. It less frequently challenges organizations to look beyond efficiency and performance issues to consider CSR, sustainability, and ethics.

SHRD is increasingly criticized for its too close alignment with the needs of the marketplace and its support for the short-term agenda of performance and profitability (Vince, 2005). Commentators such as Bierema (2009) and Turnbull and Elliott (2005) have highlighted the lack of debate within the field of HRD on social and ethical dimensions of organizations and HRD's potential contribution to building a culture of ethical and social awareness. Bierema (2009) has gone so far as to argue that the willingness of SHRD to embrace all things strategic and short term is a reaction to its marginal status in organizations. She states "embracing performativity becomes a channel for enhancing HRD's secondary status and justifying its existence" (p. 92).

We argue in this article that SHRD and HRD, in general, needs to focus on the "triple bottom line" (economic, social, and environmental). This emphasis highlights the need to reduce the impact of the organization on wider society and increase the positive impact of organizations on society. Cornelius, Todres, Janjuha-Jivraj, Woods, and Wallace (2008) provided a conceptual insight into the importance of human resource management (HRM; including HRD practices) in providing a strong foundation for a triple bottom-line philosophy. They acknowledge that these contributions potentially conflict with one another; however, the challenge is to find solutions that address this paradox. We currently have little insight into how HRD practices can be used to support CSR, sustainability, and ethical goals. This is somewhat surprising, given that HRD strategies are considered critical to achieving successful performance and profitability outcomes. Furthermore, there is strong alignment between the goals of HRD and CSR, Corporate sustainability (CS), and ethic as academic disciplines.

HRD, we argue, has a major role to play in helping organizations achieve CSR, sustainability, and ethical goals (Collier & Esteban, 2007). It can perform a number of important activities in the context of these areas. It can raise the awareness of employees and develop positive attitudes toward sustainability, environmentalism, and green work practices. It can contribute to the development of a culture that supports sustainability, CSR, and ethics. In a HRM context, Egri and Hornal (2002) have demonstrated that a strategic HRM approach that incorporated environmental and sustainability objectives significantly enhanced perceptions of organizational performance. Commentators such as Fenwick and Bierema (2008) have argued that HRD shares with sustainability CSR and societal enhancement, a common commitment to individual and organizational development. HRD focuses on issues of ethical behavior and a concern to use scarce resources effectively. It is well demonstrated that investment in HRD can have an impact on business, social, and environmental performance (Bierema & D'Abundo, 2004; Colbert & Kurucz, 2007; Hatcher, 2002; Preuss, Haunschild and Matten (2009).

These potential contributions highlight the value of investigating the role of HRD to CSR, sustainability, and ethical goals and are the focus of this special issue. Such a call for action will challenge HRD practitioners. Prior research highlights that when it comes to issues of CSR and sustainability, HRD practitioners are not particularly interested in and may not possess the skills to play a significant role in promoting these goals at senior levels in organizations.

This issue overview on the contribution of HRD to CSR, sustainability, and ethics first of all considers a number of definitional issues. It then considers the various levels at which HRD can contribute to CSR, CS, and ethics, such as at global, strategic, policy, systems, practices, and role performance levels. It concludes with an outline of the articles included in this issue.

Defining CSR, Sustainability, and Ethical Behavior

In this section, we define the three concepts that are central to the contributions in this issue. These concepts are CSR, sustainability, and ethical behavior.

CSR

Definitions of CSR are commonplace in the literature. McWilliams and Siegel (2001) defined CSR as “actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firms and that which is required by law. CSR is beyond obeying the law” (p. 117). Maignan and Ralston (2002), in contrast, defined it in terms of motivating principles driven by values, stakeholders, and performance and process including programs and activities such as sponsorships, codes of ethics, philanthropic activities, and stakeholder issues related to the community, customer employee, suppliers, and stakeholders.

CSR is increasingly viewed as a priority objective of global corporations and one that needs to be a part of corporate strategies, processes, and culture (Engen & Di Piazza, 2005;

Matten & Moon, 2008; Schuler & Jackson, 2006). It is generally considered as “contributing to sustainable development by working to improve the quality of life with employees, their families, the local community and stakeholders up and down the supply chain” (Pierce & Madden, 2009). There is an abundance of literature on CSR; however, it is criticized for its lack of engagement with explaining how CSR principles can be translated into organizational processes and practices and enhance the capacity of the organization to execute CSR strategies and achieve specific objectives (Meehan, Meehan, & Richards, 2006). Three particular conceptualizations of CSR are popular in the literature: Carroll’s (1991, 1999) conceptualization, Wood’s (1991) conceptualization, and stakeholder theory (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). These conceptualizations are useful in describing the various dimensions of CSR and in discussing and analyzing CSR. They shed some light on the outcomes of CSR; however, they fall short in explaining the operational dimensions of CSR strategy and how it can be implemented in organizations. HRD can play a significant role in this context. HRD has within its tool kit a set of knowledge and strategies in executing change, changing organizational culture, engaging with organizational stakeholders, and developing concrete strategies and actions. Hatcher (2002), for example, has argued that “HR professionals have been complicit in helping to create organizations and workplaces that do little to enhance the human spirit or protect the environment” (p. 50). Schuler and Jackson (2006) have argued that HR is increasingly called on to create win-win outcomes for organizational stakeholders. These stakeholders include shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, the community, and the wider environment.

The reality is that many organizations consider CSR as simply engaging in philanthropic activities or making donations. However, it involves something more than these surface-level activities. It fundamentally involves a strong organizational commitment to social obligations and the internalization of these obligations in the culture of the organization as well as the mobilization of employees to execute these obligations in their day-to-day actions. Employees are however rarely involved in discussions of CSR policy and strategies in organizations. This is where the contribution of HRD is particularly highlighted (Ehnert, 2009; Schoemaker, Nijhof, & Jonker, 2006).

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is a more recent development. For some, it represents an extension of the CSR concept. Sustainability has been considered in a number of ways. One conceptualization considers it to be a regime of corporate, state, and civil society actors (Bansal, 2002; Epstein, 2007), whereas others consider the term to be so vague that it means different things to different people and institutions. Generally, what constitutes sustainability in the Western context focuses on a broad view of social, environmental outcomes; an emphasis on the long-term perspective; and an inclusive operational dimension of CSR strategy and how it can be implemented in organizations.

CS is however a term of more recent vintage than CSR. Its origins can be precisely traced to the World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report,

“Our Common Future.” The World Commission on Environment and Development definition suggested that development is sustainable where an organization meets its present needs “without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 34). More recent definitions conceptualize CS in two distinct ways. The first approach, ecological sustainability, emphasizes that CS is primarily concerned with the environmental dimensions of business (Starik & Rands, 1995). The second approach considered CS to be a three-dimensional concept that focuses on environmental, economic, and social issues (Bansal, 2002).

The notion of human sustainability is a recent addition to the sustainability debate. In a seminal contribution, Pfeffer (2010) highlighted the absence of the human factor in the debate on sustainability. He described it this way: “Just as physical sustainability considers the consequences of organisational activity for material, physical resources; social sustainability might consider how organisational activities affect people’s physical and mental health and well-being—the stress of work practices on the human system . . .” (p. 35).

Kuchinke (2010) highlights the importance of human development as a key goal of HRD. He argued that the enhancement of humans should be the guiding value of HRD. Various initiatives that may be used in this context include those focused on improving health, education, and social justice.

Willard (2002) argued that HRD and HRM are just starting to focus on the connections between what they do and the sustainability agenda. A more recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management found that although some progress has been made, there is much to do. Specifically, only 40% of organizations included sustainability issues as part of their stated goals and only 23% of organizations indicated that sustainability issues were included in the organization’s annual report. Where such issues were included, they were driven primarily by good corporate citizenship and ethical considerations (SHRM, 2008). A survey of HR managers by Ashridge (2008) found that executive development was one of the more obvious strategies to building a workforce that is attuned to sustainability issues. Pierce and Madden (2009) suggested that sustainable development raises a number of significant challenges for HR and by extension HRD. These include identifying and responding to emerging societal trends, helping to deliver sustainable returns to investors, responding to government and regulatory expectations, and playing a role in influencing the public policy agenda. They concluded that the sustainability agenda had slowly shifted from the fringe and should now be something that is driven by HR. For sustainability to be realized, it is important that HRD understand its strategic contribution to achieving an integrated sustainability (physical and human) agenda and understand how various HRD strategies and practices can support sustainability goals.

Ethical Behavior

Ethics focuses on behaviors that are not necessarily codified by law but are considered by organizations to be necessary for society and all stakeholders (Carroll, 1999). Some organizations seek to promote an ethical culture/climate by focusing on positive values

that shape the ethical beliefs and actions of employees (Trevino & Nelson, 2004). Ethical behavior focuses on issues of good, bad, right, and wrong. Organizations use a variety of strategies to shape ethical behavior. Some organizations prepare codes of ethics that outline ethical values and behavioral requirements (Valentine & Barnett, 2004). Organizations also implement specialized training to provide employees with guidance concerning ethics (Valentine & Fleischman, 2004). The primary motivation for implementing these strategies is to ensure that employees perform their work roles in an ethical manner.

There is evidence that employees prefer organizations that promote ethical behavior. It increases job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement with CSR (Somers, 2001; Trevino & Nelson, 2004). Ethical awareness programs enhance an organization's ethical culture as well as corporate-level attention to CSR (Zenisek, 1979). A study by SHRM (2008) found that ethical and responsible business practices are gradually moving to the centre of organizational strategy. Jack (2007) has emphasized that global corporations operating in different legal and social contexts have begun to recognize the need for a moral compass. Figure 1 conceptualizes the relationship between the three concepts. The depiction is nonhierarchical in nature and acknowledges that there are significant areas of overlap between the three concepts. The three concepts are focused on enhancing societal welfare. Each concept takes a different path to achieving this goal. Ethics focuses on standards of behavior adapted by organizations and argues that employees must engage in moral reflection on their actions. CSR focuses on the need to supplement the economic focus of organizations with a concern for society. CS envisages that the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental objectives is interdependent and includes both an emphasis on the human and the physical aspects of sustainability. The three activities in interaction with each other have the potential to enhance the social reputation of the organization

Conceptualizing the Contribution of HRD to CSR, Sustainability, and Ethics

The contribution that HRD can make to CSR, sustainability, and ethics cannot be understood as a "one size fits all" approach. It must take account of the size of the organization, its sectoral and institutional context, the historical evolution of HRD within the organization, and the skills and competencies of those responsible for driving the HRD agenda. Becker, Carboli, and Langella (2010) conceptualize the journey as one that moves from the view that HRD considers employees as either a cost to be minimized or an asset to be exploited to one that acknowledges that HRD goals need to be aligned to meet CSR, CS, and ethics goals. The focus is on long-term sustainability, social responsibility, and ethical actions. The major task for HRD is to enhance the values, skills, and competencies of employees so that they can contribute to a triple bottom-line philosophy (Rimanoczy & Pearson, 2010).

Within HRD theory, two particular theoretical perspectives can be used to explain the potential contribution of HRD to CSR, CS, and ethics. Social identity theory

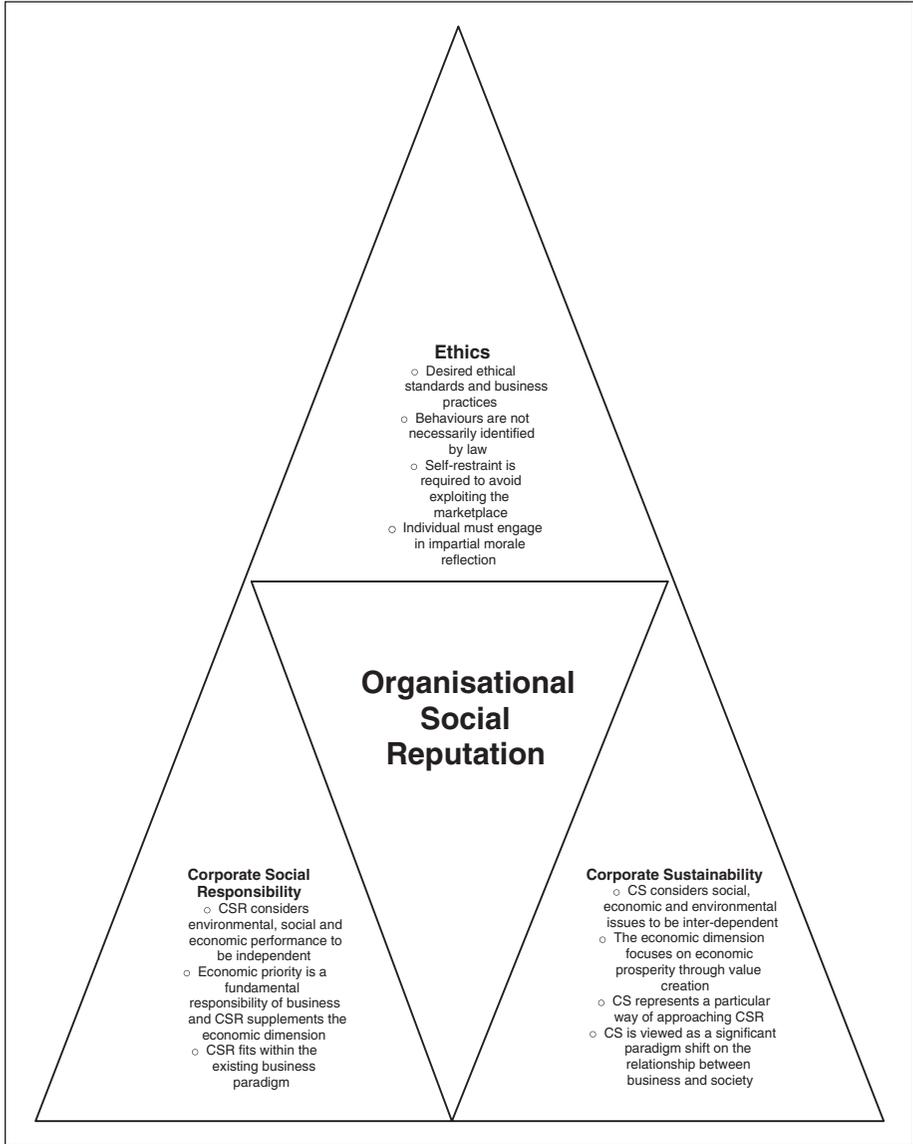


Figure 1. Understanding corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical behavior

(Ashforth & Mael, 1989) can be used to explain how individuals identify with groups and organizations and how they become attracted to organizations based on their CSR, CS, and ethical behavior (Marin & Ruiz, 2007). Similarly, attachment theory can be used to explain how various aspects of work behavior are based on attachment types.

Table 1. HRD's Contribution to CSR, CS, and Ethical Behavior: Foundation, Traction, and Integration

Focus	Foundation	Traction	Integration	Competitiveness outcomes	CSR, CS, and ethical behavior outcomes
Global HRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train expatriate managers and employees to be culturally aware and operate ethically • Ensure that all global contractors act ethically • Foster local stakeholder relationships • Communicate organizational actions around CSR, CS, and ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to advance CSR, CS, and ethics goals • Monitor the abuses of ethics and take appropriate actions • Cooperate with global human rights organizations and implement human rights principles across the corporation • Take a leadership role within the corporation to ensure that it acts ethically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use global HRD initiatives to foster a corporate brand around CSR, CS, and ethics • Focus on global welfare issues and human sustainability • Broaden the strategic reference frame of the corporation • Broaden the corporations' conceptions of capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more engaged and satisfied human resource base • High levels of individual and unit performance • Increased attractiveness of the organization to an employee • Increased competitive advantage due to enhanced brand recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development opportunities for minority and excluded groups • Elimination of unethical practices, abuse, and mistreatment in all parts of the corporation • Concern for green and environmental impact • Leadership that is more in tune with societal issues • Greater focus on recognizing the interests and rights of future generations

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Focus	Foundation	Traction	Integration	Competitiveness outcomes	CSR, CS, and ethical behavior outcomes
Strategic HRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to strategic formulation processes Public statement of HRD commitment to CSR, CS, and ethics Engage in dialogue with stakeholders and respond to their legitimate concerns Incorporate CSR, CS, and ethics issues into HRD vision, mission, and strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage organizational change processes to build CSR, CS, and ethics culture Inculcate values through positioning of HRD Use HRD strategies to facilitate employee engagement with CSR, CS, and ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a governance role within organization Continual engagement with stakeholders to foster learning and relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the local and global context in which the organization operates Achieving a balance of environmental, social, and economic value for the business Achieving of strategic objectives but not at the expense of society Greater engagement of employees in strategic goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement of employees to work more environmentally friendly Partnering with environmentally friendly suppliers and customers Development of strategic partnerships with nonprofit sector and nongovernment organizations Participation in or sponsoring of projects in the community An inclusive approach to stakeholders in the society

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Focus	Foundation	Traction	Integration	Competitiveness outcomes	CSR, CS, and ethical behavior outcomes
HRD policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop leadership capabilities around CSR, CS, and ethics Develop employee awareness of CSR, CS, and ethics Evaluate learning interventions to assess CSR, CS, and ethics awareness Design diversity initiatives and diversity awareness training Conduct needs assessments to identify who needs training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop competencies around CSR, CS, and ethics Implement HRD practices that encourage diversity Develop the leadership competencies to deliver strategic and societal objectives Continually develop leaders to demonstrate the principles and values of CSR, CS, and ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate collaborative development processes with stakeholders Implement strategies to ensure sustainability competencies at all levels within the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced knowledge skills and CSR competencies Enhanced corporate reputation which brings commercial advantages Strong relationship with suppliers and customers who value a green approach Strong clarity concerning the value of a societal approach to competitiveness Recognized as a responsible employer; therefore will attract top talent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a corporate culture that respects societal issues Greater CSR, sustainability, and ethics awareness External stakeholders recognize the organization as a leader on societal issues Reduced discrimination and respect for society Enhanced relationships with community Strong global ranking on sustainability

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Focus	Foundation	Traction	Integration	Competitiveness outcomes	CSR, CS, and ethical behavior outcomes
HRD systems within the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that competency frameworks include statements of CSR, CS, and ethics behavior Include CSR, CS, and ethics issues in all induction and socialization processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop mechanisms to enable internal stakeholders in HRD initiatives focused on CSR, CS, and ethics Implement HRD processes that ensure an equitable representation of all organizational groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate social, environmental, and ethical considerations into talent and leadership development systems Gather and disseminate metrics on CSR, CS, and ethics Foster systems to enable external stakeholder engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An integrated approach to HRD in organizations that reaps financial benefits for the organization Significant reduction in transaction costs, enhanced reputational capital, and long-term competitive advantage An accumulation of knowledge and skill in relation to organizational training and culture change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear systems to address ethical and social issues A clear role and expertise process within the organization to articulate the societal agenda Embedding of a socially responsible approach in all business activities

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Focus	Foundation	Traction	Integration	Competitiveness outcomes	CSR, CS, and ethical behavior outcomes
HRD practitioner roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on increasing employee engagement to CSR, CS, and ethics Articulate the values of CSR, CS, and ethics through role model behavior Gain senior management support for CSR, CS, and ethics initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRD professionals continually articulate the action dimensions of CSR, CS, and ethics Coach leaders on the cultural changes required to be socially aware Manage the costs associated with CSR, CS, and ethics initiatives and report on performance to employees Develop appropriate time frames for CSR, CS, and ethics change processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutionalize HRD's contribution in executing CSR, CS, and ethics initiatives Translate CSR, sustainability, and ethics mission into processes, policies, and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a clear change agenda to make the organization more competitive through pursuing social issues Increased employee engagement and commitment by employees to organizations Recruitment and retention of top talent who value working with a socially responsible organization Willingness of consumers to conduct more business with ethically and socially aware organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear identification of stakeholder groups and identification of their core social needs Performance of a combination of reactive and proactive social responsibilities Clear articulation of the action dimension of social responsibility Enhanced stakeholder relationships, strong ethical awareness, and clear responses to stakeholders

Note: HRD = human resource development; CSR = corporate social responsibility; CS = corporate sustainability.

Therefore, organizations that pursue CSR, CS, and ethical behavior can expect employees to show strong attachment toward the organization concerning these activities. HRD typically operates at a number of levels in the modern corporation: global HRD, strategic HRD, individual HRD policies, systems and practices, and HRD practitioner roles. HRD involvement around CSR, CS, and ethics needs to embrace each level of activity to make a contribution and become an integral part of such activities. The contribution of HRD in each area can be viewed in terms of foundational, traction, and integration activities. It is first of all necessary to build the foundations; however, this must move to a point where there is traction and finally integration (Fry & Slocum, 2008; Jabbour and Santos 2008; Lee, 2007). Integration focuses on a situation where CSR, CS, and ethics are fully integrated into all aspects of the organization.

The dimensions of our hierarchy of contribution are explained in the next paragraphs. What we propose represents a major step up for HRD. HRD initiatives have often been narrowly focused on solving problems and dilemmas within the four boundary walls of the organization (McLean, 2004). Shareholder interests and quarterly forecasts have dominated agendas and focused senior executive eyes inward often to the exclusion of balanced sustainable development in harmony with local communities and the environment. However, several contributions have acknowledged that HRD's impact goes beyond mere individual and organizational concerns (Zidan, 2001) to address national concerns (McLean, 2004) and operate within a cross-national, international, and global context (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006).

The specific contribution of HRD in a societal context can be understood through a resource-based view (RBV) of the firm. This view clearly argues that a firm's resources represent not only assets but also create value. It therefore follows that where organizations pursue socially focused initiatives, these can be a source of both competitive advantage and enable firms to operate in a sustainable and ethical way. Wood (1991) argued that to translate CSR and similar initiatives into action requires responsiveness and includes three components: environmental management; stakeholder management; and issues management. HRD plays a major role in advocating the responsiveness dimension through its global reach, its strategic focus, its policies and practices, its systems, and its role performance. It can also play a role in addressing the needs of stakeholders and in prioritizing the issues that need to be addressed in the short, medium, and long term.

Global HRD

Increasingly, HRD operates in a global context. Multinational companies (MNCs), for example, operate global HRD and learning functions. Given HRD's potential reach in MNCs and global corporations, it is in a position to engage employees and leaders in societal issues through influencing the board and educating executives in CSR, CS, and ethics issues. It can train leaders to be ethically aware, to understand human rights, and to ensure that leaders are aware of corporate governance issues (Wirtenberg, Harmon, Russell, & Fairfield, 2007). Global HRD functions are particularly well positioned to

engage with human rights and environmental organizations (Redington, 2005). Given the growing importance of human capital as a success factor, global HRD has a major role to play in developing a culture that focuses on societal issues. Furthermore, global HRD has a particular agenda in demonstrating respect for cultural differences and in sensitivity to imposing values, ideas, beliefs when creating global HRD policies and programs. These will enable organizations to be both competitive and meet their obligations to society. Global HRD can engage in a variety of actions to build CSR, CS, and ethics into the organization, including leveraging stakeholders to create value for the organization, enhancement of the corporate brand, help the organization to reorient its notions of business growth by broadening its conception of capabilities, broaden the strategic frame of reference of the organization, and develop a dialogue on CSR, CS, and ethical issues among executives and help build consensus on what these issues mean to stakeholders.

Strategic HRD

A key concern of strategic HRD is to ensure that HRD activities align with corporate strategies (Garavan, 2007). Strategic HRD has a major role to play in managing organizational change and in preparing organizations to engage in socially responsible activities. This role involves incorporating societal issues into the HRD vision, mission, and strategies and demonstrating a strong commitment to such issues in practice. For organisations to have a good reputation socially, they must be consistent in how they manage their employees as well as their external stakeholders. Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, and Williams (2006) found that where organizations invest in CSR-type activities, it fostered strong relationship with communities. Employees will focus on CSR activities to assess the extent to which their employer values relationship with the community. A strong focus on socially responsible activities on the part of HRD can help foster belongingness with both the organization and society. The strategic dimensions of HRD are not always exploited in a social responsibility context (Fenwick & Bierema, 2008). However, Agrawal (2007) does demonstrate that where organizations adopt HR and HRD policies that are socially focused, they can lead to significant economic, societal, and environmental outcomes. Specific initiatives where HRD can make a contribution include focusing the human capital pool toward CSR- and CS-framed strategies; focusing HRD strategy to support business initiatives that focus on sustainability; ensuring the alignment of human capital capability with CSR, CS, and ethics vision and business strategies; ensuring that there is a sufficient focus on human sustainability; and providing leaders with the skills to drive positive change.

HRD Policies and Practices

Policies and practices represent key initiatives that HRD can use to internalize social responsibility initiatives and ensure that CSR, CS, and ethical issues achieve traction

within the organization and eventually become internalized. Policies and practices provide a framework that contributes to the development of a socially aware culture and creates awareness toward the need to achieve business goals in an ethically, socially, and environmentally responsible way (Agrawal, 2007). The SHRM (2008) study found that HR practices focused on encouraging employees to be environmentally friendly were the most frequently used in organizations. As HRD practices typically focus on knowledge, skills, and attitudes, HRD can play a major role in developing the skills of individuals to build relationships with a variety of stakeholders and to understand the impact of the organization on various dimensions of society. HRD can also help build competencies to enable organizations build sustainability in the longer term while also enabling it to deliver on short-term business goals. An effective suite of practices enables organizations to integrate social responsible activities and organizational performance. These practices include developing the capabilities of leaders to achieve CSR, CS, and ethical objectives; ensuring that the development process focuses on human sustainability; and providing employees with the skills to implement CSR/CS-framed business objectives. The ability to help organizational members to work in cross-functional teams is also another valued contribution. Many CSR and CS initiatives are cross-functional in nature and involve both internal and external stakeholders.

HRD Systems

HRD systems typically focus on information systems designed to generate HRD-related information, tracking mechanisms, evaluation systems, program nomination processes, learning management systems, and contemporary management systems (Garavan, 2007; Lytras & Pouloudi, 2006) and HRD audits (Young, 2006). HRD systems set standards for the organization; they generate appropriate data and provide tools to enable the evaluation of progress toward CSR, CS, and ethics goals. HRD processes the knowledge, tools, and concepts to develop appropriate measures to evaluate the social responsibility of organizations. These activities will enable the identification of both direct and indirect outcomes of CSR activities and indicate the contribution to enhanced business performance. Systems also focus on the allocation of resources for green, CSR, and sustainability initiatives and their measurement in terms of outcomes. A variety of measures can be used by HRD toward these ends, including enhanced employee morale; stronger public image; increased employee loyalty; increased brand recognition; position as an employer of choice; and positive financial bottom line as a result of the organization's social program (SHRM, 2008).

HRD Roles

HRD professionals perform a variety of roles in the context of CSR, CS, and ethics. These roles focus on both creating policies and implementing them through appropriate practices. The SHRM (2008) survey found that 11% of respondents considered that HR had a role in creating policies, whereas 18% considered that it had a role in their

implementation. Ulrich (1997) argued that HRD professionals can perform four roles: strategic partner, administrative expert, change agent, and employee champion. These roles provide the action to move on from interest in societal-type activities. They enable socially responsive activities to be embedded in the organization and ensure their effective integration with all business operations. Strategic partner roles typically focus on designing CSR, sustainability, and ethics strategies. The administrative role enables the HRD specialist to develop the infrastructure to implement those strategies. The change agent role enables real cultural change to take place in the organization and facilitates the integration of these activities into strategy, culture, structure, and behavior. The employee champion role helps to ensure that employee knowledge, skill, and competencies are linked to societal strategies and that issues of concern to employees are advocated at senior levels within the organization.

Focus of the Issue

This issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources* examines the role of HRD in addressing important societal issues. It looks at the usefulness of HRD tools to government bodies and agencies and the role of HRD in economic and social policy. It also details how organizational responsibilities lie beyond profit and loss accounts toward a broader societal agenda and focus on making a difference to the lives of employees, customers, and local communities.

Specifically, there is a pressing need to examine how societal change can be managed and an emphasis on developing partnerships between governments, organizations, communities, and individuals as the basis for tackling challenging problems. The field of HRD, with its roots in learning, examines ways in which knowledge and expertise can be developed for the benefit of individuals, groups, organizations, communities, or humanity as a whole (McLean & McLean, 2001). For their part, Metcalfe and Rees (2005) also acknowledge the existence of HRD at a societal, international, and global level and identify a range of governmental and state institutions as having an important role in shaping HRD policy and strategy. They argue that a key strength of HRD lies in its breadth of application and its ability to tackle larger national- and international-level problems through its ability to tap existing human potential and intentionally shape work-based, community-based, and society-based expertise for the purpose of improving not only individual and organizational performance but also societal growth, improved standards of living, and an enhanced quality of life.

Three themes are specifically explored in this issue looking at HRD's impact on society, namely, environmental change; crisis response and learning (from both natural disasters and man-made incidents); and the responsibilities of organizations in an era of global change. In relation to environmental change, McGuire calls for greater exploration of the implications and consequences of environmental science research on management practices. He sets out eight ideas for making management practices more environmentally sustainable. In the second article, Lee argues that we are moving in a world of shifting boundaries, conflict, and change and questions the role that HRD may

play in addressing issues such as democratic governance in organizations, inequality in the workplace, and abuses of power and exploitation. She maintains that HRD may perform a mediating role in balancing competing priorities in the workplace.

The theme of crisis response and learning looks at the HRD lessons learned in the aftermath of natural disasters and man-made incidents. Germain conducted a document analysis of 10 reports examining the actions taken by federal and voluntary agencies in dealing with Hurricane Katrina. She identifies a clear role for HRD in crisis planning, building cohesive teams, knowledge sharing, and developing more flexible organizational structures to deal with major incidents. The fourth article by Wang and Hutchins adopts a single case (The Virginia Tech Campus shootings in 2007) and uses secondary and archival data to glean deep insights into how the crisis was handled. It examines how the university responded to the crisis using Mitroff's crisis management model. The article concludes that HRD has an important role to play in crisis management through interventions and tools such as crisis leadership development, crisis management training, and greater use of organizational learning. In the fifth article, Grenier examines museums as agents of change in altering and shaping individual beliefs and behavior. Using the theories of transformative learning and situated cognition, she examines how museums (such as the Holocaust Museum) encourage critical reflection shaping how individuals see themselves and the world around them. By virtue of museums immersing individuals within a particular historical context, museums not only allow individuals to learn about the root causes of hate and inequity but also encourage them to become agents of social change in their communities and society.

The final theme of organizational responsibilities explores the duties of organizations toward community and society. Garavan and colleagues build on the work of Bierema and D'Abundo (2004) in setting out the agenda for a socially conscious HRD, where organizations move beyond narrow utilitarian interests to improving societal welfare and meeting societal expectations. The article specifically examines three levels of behavioral barriers to the implementation of CSR and CS in organizations. The authors propose a typology of HRD interventions that HRD may use to address these barriers.

This issue is likely to be of value to organizations looking to adopt a communitarian, person-centred approach to business. It provides useful guidance for dealing with environmental challenges as well as preparing for unexpected crises. We wish to express our thanks to the individual authors for responding positively to our invitation to take part in the issue and hope that you as reader benefit from the range and depth of the contributions contained within the issue.

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