

# Chapter 10

## Use Value and HRD and HRM Flexibility: Implications for HRD Practice

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### ABSTRACT

*Human Resource Development (HRD) and Management (HRM) flexibility emphasizes flexible learning, educational technology, flexible firm model, human resource flexibility, high performance work systems, and contingent employment. Human resource departments should examine the development and management of their human resources in the context of the employees' use value within organizations. This paper analyzes the concept of use value of the employees within the theoretical and practical applications of HRD and HRM flexibility and provides recommendations for organizations to increase the use value of workers. Employee use value directly contributes to the organization's success or lack thereof.*

### INTRODUCTION

Organizations are continuously becoming more nimble and flexible to adjust and meet global challenges and productivity demands. Within organizations there are human resources and technological resources. There are five common values (location, use, maintenance, modification, and time) between the two as described by Hughes (2010; 2012; 2015). Use value, as described by Hughes, emphasizes the importance of employ-

ees effectively using their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) on the job. Use value becomes effective and valuable to the organization and the employee when employees and leaders continually analyze the employee's job performance to maintain and/or seek improvements. The use of his/her KSAs is at the discretion of the employee. It can only benefit the organization when the employee uses his/her capability to provide peak performance.

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To appropriately adjust to daily demands, organizations must identify and understand each of its employees' use value within the organization (Hughes, 2010, 2012). Beyond understanding their use value, organization leaders must, with the assistance of the employees, properly align the employees' use value within organizations' flexible human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM) structures and systems.

As organization structures and systems are continuously leveled out and flattened, many dated assembly-line operations developed under the Fordism model (Schoenberger, 1988) are being replaced by flexible production systems (MacDuffie, 1995). Use value is important within flexible production systems because employees are no longer doing repeated job functions over and over. They are tasked to employ variable KSAs as needed. Thus, flexible HRD and HRM practices together with flexible job content are becoming increasingly more important to the organization's success at achieving performance and productivity goals (Jakupec & Garrick, 2000) to maintain effective organization structures (Connelly & Gallagher, 2006; Jakupec & Garrick, 2000; Kalleberg, 2001).

Understanding HRD flexibility and employing HRM flexibility for continuing high utilization of both human and technological resources can increase their use values (Hughes, 2010; 2012). This chapter's objective is to link use value (Hughes, 2010; 2012), HRD and HRM flexibility, to HRD practice as follows:

1. Introduce the relationship between use value, HRD flexibility, and HRM flexibility;
2. Provide suggestions to develop and manage human resources to increase their use value; and
3. Describe the relationship of use value, HRD flexibility, and HRM flexibility to HRD practice.

## **BACKGROUND**

The premise of utility was present in early theories of labor economics and the "utility of a thing makes it a use value" (Marx, 1906, p. 8). This concept is also relevant to HRD and HRM. For today's organizations, the "thing" is people and the utility is derived from the value of the people's labor and use value (Hughes, 2010; 2012; 2014). Organizations attempt to ensure that employees are sufficiently developed and effectively use learning and technology, that HRD and HRM practices are flexible, and that the combined value of these actions results in solid employee and organization performance. The significance of critical factors like productivity, quality, and speed span across a number of management techniques and strategies (Porter, 1996) and is why employee utilization and flexible practices are important to successful management policy and organization capability when it comes to the implementation of strategic organization plans (Guest, 1987; Guest, 1997; Porter, 1996). In a competitive, global marketplace, organizations need rapid adaptability to changes beyond current practices of employee and technology use values.

For this study, use value is defined as value that can be created through the multidimensionality of each individual employee. Employee use value can influence the quality and productivity of work that individual employees produce. Use value (Hughes, 2010; 2012) of employees can assist organization leaders as they design and manage the organization's human resource structure. A holistic view of HRD and HRM suggests that employees must be understood in a broad context to include the integration of their learning and development with their proficiency and use (Schmidt & Kunzman, 2006).

Organizations must develop and manage their human resources to get the full value of their contribution and efforts. The potential for getting the full economic value out of employees is dependent on the utilization of employees' skills, experi-

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