

Chapter 64

Influencing People and Technology Using Human Resource Development (HRD) Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Historically, American workers are continuing to be displaced by the productivity gains of technology and the competition for cheap laborers in a globalized economy. Human resource development (HRD) professionals are seeking ways to address rapid, continuous changes in technology and some, unfounded, fears and concerns regarding the influence of globalization on middle-class workers. Globalization efforts do not need to equal unemployment for American middle-class workers. Globalization can add opportunities for American middle-class workers to increase their job prospects by learning new skills, including how to leverage technological innovations for their advantage within the global job market. HRD professionals have an opportunity to assist workers with their skill development and improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, and notably since Zakaria's (2010) statement that "technology and globalization are shattering the middle class" in America (p. 31), American workers are continuing to be displaced by the productivity gains of technology and the competition for cheap laborers in a globalized economy. Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals are seeking ways to address rapid, continuous changes in

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technology and some, unfounded, fears and concerns regarding the influence of globalization on middle class workers. Globalization efforts do not need to equal unemployment for American middle class workers. Globalization can add opportunities for American middle class workers to increase their job prospects by learning new skills including how to leverage technological innovations for their advantage within the global job market. HRD professionals have an opportunity to assist workers with their skill development and improvement.

HRD professionals are engaged with workers in training and development, career development, and organization development initiatives (Mankin, 2001; Swanson & Holton, 2001). These initiatives are vital to employee development within organizations and many employees seek training and development opportunities so that they can build successful careers and the ability to adapt to organizational and marketplace changes.

Workers are beginning to recover from the Great Recession of 2007 and HRD professionals are tasked with making their employees' recovery more viable. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) suggest that there was "[a]n important challenge for the practice of training... to integrate the training function with employee selection, performance, management, rewards, and other human resource practices (Aguinis, 2009; Aguinis & Pierce, 2008; Cascio & Aguinis, 2005)" (p. 467). Their assessment is currently still needed and will be needed for the foreseeable future as artificial intelligence using robots, computer technology, simulations, avatars, and other technological innovations are being used to realign and displace workers. The current post-fordism era is associated with significant changes to American culture, organizations, and individuals (Heffernan, 2000). However, the influence of technology on the development of people has rarely been discussed within the HRD research literature (Githens, Dirani, Gitonga, & Teng, 2008; Hughes, 2010; 2012).

HRD, a relatively new field of study, has scholars and professionals who are continuously examining and testing its theories and philosophy. Organizations are mutable and strive to succeed through the people and technology in which it invests and employ. The management and development of both people and technology is essential to the competitive advantage of organizations. The management of these critical domains is led by individuals whom often have limited interaction and different vantage points through which they examine and determine success. The dynamics of HRD theory and philosophy on the relationships between people and technology within organizations is an area requiring more exploration within the HRD field.

This chapter explores the extent to which HRD philosophy influence the relationship between people and technology. We have examined whether or not HRD professionals and researchers deny that there is a viable relationship between people and technology, and whether or not HRD professionals and researchers are limiting the field because of their ethical beliefs which juxtapose people to technology.

BACKGROUND

HRD has evolved from sociology, to business, to education and is still looking for a place of its own within academia (McLean, Lynham, Azevedo, Lawrence, & Nafukho, 2008). HRD has a rich history that is not well known or explained in the HRD research literature (Gosney, 2014; Gosney & Hughes 2015). Without an explanation and chronicling of its history, HRD's search for a clear philosophy is continuous and debatable amongst HRD researchers and professionals.

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