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February, 2003

What HRD Curriculum is Being Taught within HR Programs in U.S. Business Schools

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AHRD Academy of Human Resource Development

PROCEEDINGS

AHRD 2003 CONFERENCE

Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 26 – March 2, 2003

Volume 1

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What HRD Curriculum is Being Taught within HR Programs in U. S. Business Schools?

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As scholars/researchers strive to measure and describe the influence and growth of HRD in academic settings, it is important to consider the HRD curriculum taught within various schools, departments, degrees, and programs. This study located U.S. business school undergraduate and graduate HR programs, analyzed the general HRD curriculum, and compared selected training and organization development course descriptions between schools of education and business. Evidence suggests HRD has and continues to influence business-related HR academic programs.

Keywords: HRD, Human Resources, Curriculum

The number of academic human resource development (HRD) programs has substantially increased over the past 15 years (Kuchinke, 2001). This growth has been attributed to the increased demands for HRD-related employee skills, expertise, and performance in today's dynamic workplace and economic environment. Kuchinke found that the large majority of HRD programs are located in colleges and schools of education. However, as we strive to describe and measure the influence and growth of HRD in academic settings, it is important to consider the HRD curriculum taught within other schools, departments, degrees, programs, and specializations. One such area of HRD influence and growth is in human resource (HR) academic programs throughout the country. In the United States, most of these programs are located in schools of business and departments of business management. In HRD literature, however, little has been reported specifying what HRD curricula have been incorporated into such programs. Understanding this relationship is significant for academics and researchers concerned with the future of HRD as a profession and field of study. Recently, some scholarly dialogue (University of Minnesota Chautauqua, personal communication, December 6, 2002) has centered on building future relationships with HR researchers, academics, and practitioners as one mode to strengthen HRD. Having a clearer understanding our academic relationship with HR can enrich and strengthen our position for future strategic stability and growth.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study and review was to explore the curricula of HR academic programs in business schools and colleges of higher institutions of learning. A central focus was to identify specific HRD coursework within these programs. In addition, a small sample of course descriptions was analyzed to compare course content. To do this the following research questions were investigated:
1. How many HR academic programs (undergraduate and masters) can be located in the United States?
2. What is the core body of knowledge taught in HR programs?
3. What HRD curriculum is incorporated into HR programs?
4. Is the content of courses taught in HRD programs in education colleges and schools the same as the content of courses taught in business school HR programs?

This review is a content analysis of the available scholarly literature, although somewhat limited, and information about programs and curricula gathered through university and college websites. In addition, information was gathered from the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), much of which was obtained from their thorough online resource center. Among the vast information collected and reviewed, the most current and applicable to this project were subjectively chosen.

Theoretical Frameworks

A review of the literature produced a number of frameworks that demonstrate some type of integration between HRD and HRM. The three most applicable theoretical frameworks include McLagan's (1989) Human Resource Wheel (1989), Mankin's (2001) HRD Model, and Weinberg's (2002) SHRM Certification Specifications.

McLagan (1989; 1996) presented HRD as a primary component, along with human resource management (HRM), in her overall human resource model. The model presents the three components of HRD as organization development, training and development, and career development. She also explained that HRD is closely related to the following: organization and job design; selection, staffing, and retention; performance management systems; and human resource planning. Finally, she identified the four components specific to HRM that include benefits and compensation, employee assistance, union and labor relations, and HR research and information systems. McLagan's HR Wheel displays the relationship of HRD and HRM in the overall human resources arena. It also includes the primary components of an HR program. The categories and components of the wheel are summarized in Table 1. The McLagan diagram demonstrates some potential overlap or ambiguity between HRD and HRM in certain areas but clearly defines HRD's role within the overall HR arena.

Table 1. *Categories and Components of McLagan's Human Resource Wheel*

Components of HRD	Closely Related to HRD	Components of HRM
Organization Development	Organization and Job Design	Benefits and Compensation
Training and Development	Selection, Staffing, and Retention	Employee Assistance
Career Development	Performance Management Systems	Union and Labor Relations
	Human Resource Planning	HR Research and Information Systems

Note: Adapted from McLagan (1989).

Mankin (2001) expressed concern that there were no universally accepted statements of meaning and relationship of HRD and HRM. However, it has been said of both that they do have their own unique body of knowledge and research making each a professional field of study and practice (Sleezer & Sleezer, 1997; Weinberg, 2002). Mankin explained that "the use of the word 'integrated' most accurately reflects the relationship between the two. Both have their own identities as concepts, but they depend upon each other for mutual success (or, perhaps more accurately, for the mutual maximization of human resource potential in organizations)" (p. 66). He also presented an HRD model that diagrams this HRD-HRM integrated relationship. The three primary components (circles) include HRM, culture, and strategy and structure (see Figure 1). HRD is found in the overlapping areas of these three circles. It appears to be the key in connecting the components. In addition, the relationship among the three components and the following four overlapping concepts is demonstrated:
- Communications and information
- Actions and behaviors
- Management and leadership style
- Learning and knowledge

Weinberg (2002) authored the "Certification Guide" for the Human Resource Certification Institute. The book reported the general results of extensive research that identified numerous responsibilities, areas of knowledge, and core competencies needed by competent and successful human resource professionals. These results were divided into six functional areas for the two examinations (certifications) widely utilized in the HR profession:
- Professional in Human Resources (PHR)
- Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)

The six functional areas included strategic management, workforce planning and employment, human resource development, compensation and benefits, employee and labor relations, and occupational health, safety, and security (see Table 2). A percentage of the examination that focused on each functional area was determined for the certifications. It is possible that this percentage be considered the level or weight of importance that the Institute gave to each functional area. HRD is considered one of the six functional areas of HR.

Figure 1. An HRD Model: The Convergence of the Three Key Factors and the Relationship of HRD to Each of Them and the Environment

The HRD Model
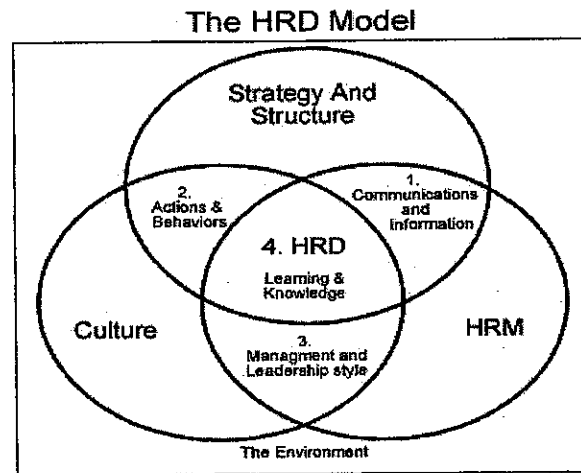
Note. The figure was originally published in Mankin, D. P. (2001). A model for human resource development. *Human Resource Development International,* 4(1), p. 79. Permission to reprint obtained from Taylor & Francis Ltd (http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals).

Table 2. *Human Resource Certification Institute Test Specifications*

Functional Areas	PHR	SPHR
Strategic Management	12%	26%
Workforce Planning and Employment	26%	16%
Human Resource Development	15%	13%
Compensation and Benefits	20%	16%
Employee and Labor Relations	21%	24%
Occupational Health, Safety, and Security	6%	5%

Note. Table was adapted from Weinburg (2002), p. 27.

Research demonstrated to SHRM and its members that HRD is an important component of HR/HRM. Weinberg (2002) defined HRD as

The processes of ensuring that the skills, knowledge, abilities, and performance of the workforce meet the current and future organizational and individual needs through developing, implementing, and evaluating activities and programs addressing employee training and development, change and performance management, and the unique needs of particular employee groups. (p. 32)

He also provided a list of 10 HRD knowledge-related areas (see Table 3) that offers insight into the HRD-HRM relationship.

Table 3. *Human Resource Certification Institute's HRD Knowledge Areas*

HRD Knowledge Areas
1. Applicable international, federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding copyrights and patents.
2. Human resource development theories and applications (including career development and leadership development).
3. Organizational development theories and applications.
4. Training methods, programs, and techniques (design, objectives, methods, etc.)
5. Employee involvement strategies.
6. Task/process analysis.
7. Performance appraisal and performance management methods.
8. Applicable international issues (for example, culture, local management approaches/practices, societal norms).
9. Instructional methods and program delivery (content, building modules of program, selection of presentation/delivery mechanism).
10. Techniques to assess HRD program effectiveness (for example, satisfaction, learning and job performance of program participants, and organizational outcomes such as turnover and productivity.

Note. Items taken from Weinberg's (2002) Human Resource Certification Institute Certification Guide (p. 34).

These frameworks were reviewed and included for a number of reasons. First, the McLagan (1989) model was chosen because it has long been held as a standard for understanding the relationship of HRD within HR. The model's components provide a list of possible courses or course elements that colleges and universities may incorporate into a comprehensive HR curriculum. It also provided the primary foundation for the initial list of courses utilized to begin data collection. Second, the Weinberg (2002) framework was used for similar reasons. SHRM is one of the most well-respected organizations in the HR academic and workforce settings. The functional areas provided general topics that encompass the HR body of knowledge. It is clear that these should be the basis of a strong academic HR program. These were also used in the creation of the initial course list for data collection. The research data from this project was used to analyze (support or refute) components of these frameworks. Finally, the Mankin (2001) model differs from the others in that it does not provide detailed components of HR. For this project, it was important to find a framework that not only diagramed the integration of HR and HRD but delved deeper into relationships with other important business concepts and phenomena. Some of these concepts were also integrated into the data collection instrument. These models were also chosen because of their clarity and value in articulating these concepts to readers, practitioners, students, and academics. Overall, these three frameworks provide insight into the relationship or integration of HRM and HRD. To further understand this relationship, program courses in university and colleges across the country were studied.

Research Methods

The purpose of this project was to explore the curricula of HR academic programs in business schools and colleges of higher institutions of learning. As already explained, a specific focus was to identify specific HRD coursework within these programs and to compare a sampling of course descriptions to analyze course content. To do this, lists of colleges and universities were obtained from SHRM. SHRM (2002) maintains an online database that includes some descriptive information about HR and HR-related graduate degrees across the country. From this comprehensive database, information about the institutions, degree titles and descriptions, and core courses (required and elective) was obtained. At the time of the data collection, the SHRM database included information about programs at 79 institutions. All programs were analyzed, and 76 were found to have actual HR programs in their business schools. The data included titles of courses that were required and elective in the program. Most of the titles were similar making compilation of data fairly simple. When there was confusion in categorization, the primary investigator was consulted.

The next task was to identify HR programs in undergraduate programs throughout the United States. SHRM also maintains a list (no additional data) of all of the colleges and universities that have active SHRM chapters. The researchers and other HR experts determined that the majority (if not all) of institutions that have official HR programs would also have SHRM chapters. Researchers then studied the websites of each institution to determine whether or not an official HR program could be located in the business school/college. Of the 392 chaptered institutions, official programs were found at 201 of them; however, detailed program and course information could only be located on the websites of 168 institutions. It was determined that many chapters were located on campuses with business management degrees but without specific HR programs. After an undergraduate program was located, pertinent information and demographics were obtained and charted. Due to the vast number of educational websites explored, specific references were not included.

An initial instrument (data collection chart) was designed for this project. The three models provided the foundation for suspected HR program courses. The instrument included one column for the name and state of the institutions and then many columns with titles of possible courses. If the program offered a certain course, an *R* was recorded in the appropriate box for a required course and an *E* for an elective option. The instrument was slightly enlarged during data collection when it was found that addition courses (not previously on the instrument) were being offered. The course columns are recorded in the *Area of HR Study* column in Tables 4 and 5.

Finally, course descriptions of training and development and organization development were collected from four HRD programs in educational colleges/schools and four HRM programs in colleges/schools of business. Only four were chosen because of limited text space. These definitions were found on institution's websites. The four HRD descriptions were obtained randomly from universities known to have strong HRD programs in colleges of education. In order to find descriptions from 4 business school HR programs, 24 institutional websites were explored (randomly chosen). It was difficult to collect this data because of the lack of clear links to course description areas on institutional websites. The 4 chosen were the only found of the 24 explored. The data was charted for analysis.

Results and Discussion

After collecting and analyzing the data, it is clear that HRD-related coursework provides foundational curricula for a majority of HR programs in the country. At the graduate level, training and development courses ranked third in the total frequency of courses offered at business colleges/schools. Of the programs analyzed, 75 percent of programs offered training and development courses. This course was a requirement at 40 of the 76 institutions for HR degrees/emphases (see Table 3). Twenty percent (n=15) of the HR graduate programs offered organization development (OD) courses, 9 of which were required. Specific career management or development courses could only be located in the coursework of 2 programs. The findings of other related coursework are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. *Content Areas Covered in Curricula of Graduate (Master's Level) HR Programs (N=76)*

Rank	Area of HR Study	Required Frequency	Elective Frequency	Total Frequency	Percent
1	Compensation and Benefits	42	18	60	79%
2	Employment Law	50	7	57	75%
3	Training and Development	40	17	57	75%
4	Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention	40	12	52	68%
5	Human Resource Strategy	49	2	51	67%
6	Labor Relations	38	7	45	59%
7	Management	39	4	43	57%
8	Human Resource Measurement	34	1	35	46%
9	International Human Resources	16	15	31	41%
10	Employee Relations	26	2	28	37%
11	Research Methods	21	1	22	29%
12	Negotiations and/or Conflict Resolutions	1	19	20	26%
13	Organizational Behavior	12	7	19	25%
14	HR Information Systems	7	12	19	25%
15	Organizational Development	9	6	15	20%
16	Psychology	3	8	12	16%
17	Leadership	7	4	11	14%
18	Managing Diversity	2	7	9	12%
19	Human Resource Planning	2	4	6	8%
20	Performance Management	2	4	6	8%
21	Business Process Analysis	0	3	3	4%
22	Career Management or Development	1	1	2	3%

At the undergraduate level, training and development courses ranked seventh in the total frequency of courses offered at business colleges/schools. Of the programs analyzed, 33 percent of programs offered training and development courses. This course was a requirement at 37 and an elective at 19 of the 168 institutions for HR degrees/emphases (see Table 4). As with the graduate degrees, 20 percent of the HR graduate programs offered OD courses and they were core or required at 18 of the 33 schools. An actual HRD course was offered in undergraduate programs of 10 percent of the institutions studied. In addition, career management or development courses were offered (either required or elective) in about 5 percent of the programs. The findings of other related undergraduate coursework are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. *Content Areas Covered in Curricula of U.S. Undergraduate HR Programs (N=168)*

Rank	Area of Human Resource Study	Required Frequency	Elective Frequency	Total Frequency	Percent
1	Human Resource Management	150	3	153	91%
2	Compensation and Benefits	94	29	123	73%
3	Labor Relations	83	27	110	65%
4	Organizational Behavior	79	8	87	52%
5	Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention	62	20	82	49%
6	Employment Law	45	13	58	35%
7	Training and Development	37	19	56	33%
8	Emerging and Current Issues	14	30	44	26%
9	International Human Resources	15	20	35	21%
10	Psychology	22	13	35	21%
11	Organizational Development	18	15	33	20%
12	Negotiations and/or Conflict Resolution	13	20	33	20%
13	Leadership	16	14	30	18%
14	Employee Relations	21	5	26	15%
15	Human Resource Information Systems	17	9	26	15%
16	Safety, Health, and Security	12	8	20	12%
17	Human Resource Development	13	3	16	10%
18	Managing Diversity	6	8	14	8%
19	Career Management or Development	6	3	9	5%
20	Quality Management	3	6	9	5%
21	Human Resource Strategy	5	3	8	5%
22	Team Management	1	7	8	5%
23	Wage and Salary Administration	4	3	7	4%
24	Performance Management	4	2	6	4%
25	Personnel Administration	4	2	6	4%
26	Research Methods	4	2	6	4%
27	Human Resource Planning	3	1	4	2%
28	Human Resource Measurement	0	3	3	2%
29	Business Process Analysis	2	1	3	2%

The results included in Tables 4 and 5 support the premise that HRD-related coursework is deeply engrained into business school HR program curriculum throughout the county. It also appears that the curricula content are results that support McLagan's (1989) and Weinberg's (2002) HR frameworks. The majority of the components of the McLagan model are core courses in the HR problems. Some, however, appear to be integrated into other or combined courses. For example, the model depicts *HR Planning* and *Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention* as separate components. Most institutions combine these into one course. In addition, the *Organization and Job Design* component appears to be integrated into various courses offered. The same is true of the Weinberg framework. Typically, there is not an *Occupational Health, Safety, and Security* course but this is covered in detail in most *Employment Law* courses. Overall, both frameworks were supported by the results of this content analysis project. These results also provide some support for Mankin's (2001) model. Many HR courses (especially at the graduate level) focused around business and HR strategy while elements of culture (actions and behaviors, management and leadership style, and learning and knowledge) appear to be threaded throughout the elective and required coursework. The findings of HR-HRD integration also strongly support this model. Because of the large number of HRD course taught in business school HR programs, it is clear that strong HRD academics are essential for these programs to effectively educate students and publish applicable HRD research.

A complete analysis and comparison of HRD course descriptions was not attempted in this content analysis research project. It was deemed, however, that a side-by-side comparison of training and development and OD course descriptions from a few universities may provide fuel for future discussions and research on the topic. Descriptions of courses (training and development, organization development) from four HRD and four HRM

programs were compared. Because of limited space, only organization development definitions are included in this article (see Table 6). The training and development definitions analyzed from schools of education were from University of Minnesota, Texas A & M, University of Illinois, and Oklahoma State University while the four from schools of business included Northern Illinois University, Ohio State University, Cornell, and Brigham Young University. Because descriptions *within* the colleges of education and business differed widely, no clear patterns or findings could be established when comparing definitions *between* education and business. Unfortunately, the analysis of these definitions provided neither confirmed nor disconfirmed the theoretical frameworks discussed. A deeper analysis of curriculum, class objectives, and syllabi would probably have resulted in different comparison and contrast findings. There were, however, similarities among many of the descriptions included.

Table 6. *Comparison of Organization Development or Change Course Descriptions*

Schools of Education	Schools of Business
Introduction to major concepts, skills, and techniques for organization development and change. *University of Minnesota*	A study of organizational change and methodologies related with change and improvement. Examination of planned change on processes, strategies, people, and culture in organizations. *Pennsylvania State University*
Conceptual tools needed to understand theories of change and to develop ways of operationalizing change for education and research. *Texas A & M*	A practical and pragmatic investigation into the conduct of change in organizations in order to improve organization performance. *Ohio State University*
Addresses the history, concepts, theories, and techniques of Organization Development as applied in Human Resource Education; emphasis on creating, managing, and sustaining system-wide change in public and private organization; organized around diagnosis, implementation, and evaluation of individual, team, and organization-wide interventions *University of Illinois*	An experiential course that deals with OD and its role in the organizational change process. Combines the opportunity for hands-on practice in a workshop setting. Students will have responsibility for researching and writing a paper that examines a specific method, technique, or critical issue; an in-class demonstration/presentation illustrating applications of a chosen subject; and a final project requiring a comprehensive proposal that describes an appropriate and logically supported intervention strategy. *Cornell*
Seminar examining the field of organization development. Emergence of the field, diagnosis, performance, change management, the client, and the consultation. *Oklahoma State University*	Forces operating to induce or resist change in organization; current models and methods for organizational intervention and the intervention process. *Brigham Young University*

Limitations

Three primary limitations should be noted for this content analysis research project. First, because of the research design, many HR programs may not have been analyzed and included in the results. Second, a comparison of an equal number of HRD programs was not conducted. This may have enriched the overall results by supporting theory with what is happening in the implementation of the curriculum. Kuchinke (2001) analyzed HRD curriculum that may be used in future comparisons. Third, it was sometimes difficult to categorize certain courses because of the variety of titles and course descriptions explored. Gathering this data became somewhat subjective at times. Finally, because of the severely limited number of course descriptions studied, comparison results should be considered exploratory and should not be generalized.

Conclusion and Implications

This content analysis addressed many key issues in understanding the relationship between HR and HRD. This article reviewed three key HR-HRD frameworks important in accomplishing this (understanding) and other possible future goals (e.g., to keep HRD separate and distinct, to integrate fields while keeping specializations, to provide

support while remaining distinct). The project found ample support for the McLagan (1989) and Weinberg (2002) frameworks with some support of the Mankin (2001) model. It brought some clarity to overall HR coursework requirements and found evidence that HRD courses support part of the foundational curriculum of HR business school programs (also supportive of McLagan's model). Finally, it may have started discussions on the differences between HRD courses taught in HRD programs versus HR business schools.

This research project was designed to systematically investigate academic HR programs but appeared to raise more questions than it answered. Results suggest that HRD curricula are well integrated into required and elective coursework in business school HR academic programs throughout the country. Many HR professors teach HRD courses and have varying levels of expertise in the field. In addition, HRD theories and practices are threaded throughout much of the curricula in a variety of HR business courses. Because of this, it is of utmost importance for HRD academics to develop research and curriculum partnerships with business school faculty. These partnerships could serve to effectively further research and theory development in both fields of study. More specifically, researchers (Ellinger, Watkins, & Bostrom, 1999) have recommended that "research is needed that specifically investigates the processes and behaviors associated with how managers and leaders facilitate learning and build learning organizations" (p. 388).

According to Mankin (2001), "HRD and HRM are integrated concepts; but each has its own distinctive characteristics" (p. 80). Even though HRD has long strived to identify its uniqueness, we would suggest that HRD professionals embrace their HRD history and development as an integrated field of study. As we move forward with our strengths based in an education, we can widely contribute to research and teaching in business schools throughout the world.

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