Workplace-Focused Learning: Perspective on Continuing Professional Education and Human Resource Development
Laura L Bierema, Michael Eraut. Advances in Developing Human Resources. San Francisco: Feb 2004. Vol. 6, Iss. 1; pg. 52

Abstract (Summary)
Learning in the workplace is a major focus for both continuing professional education and human resource development. Yet too often providers and researchers in both areas pay little attention to the learning that actually happens within the work context. In this article, learning in the workplace is analyzed through an examination of the history, assumptions, stakeholders, foci, approaches, and issues in continuing professional education and human resource development. This analysis leads to suggestions for an increased focus on learning. [PUBLICATION ABSTRACT]

Headnote
The problem and the solution. Learning in the workplace is a major focus for both continuing professional education and human resource development. Yet too often providers and researchers in both areas pay little attention to the learning that actually happens within the work context. In this article, learning in the workplace is analyzed through an examination of the history, assumptions, stakeholders, foci, approaches, and issues in continuing professional education and human resource development. This analysis leads to suggestions for an increased focus on learning.

Keywords: continuing professional education; human resource development; modes of learning; learning traditions; workplace learning

The workplace is both a rich context for learning and the main focus for the majority of human resource development (HRD) supported learning and a substantial proportion of continuing professional education (CPE) activities. The purpose of this article is to examine the traditions, assumptions, stakeholders, foci, approaches, and issues of CPE and HRD. The article also compares and contrasts these two approaches to workplace learning and discusses the extent to which workplace learning occurs independently of either CPE or HRD initiatives. In many profession-dominated organizations, internally organized learning activities may be labeled as CPE, whereas in another organization, the same pattern of planning and activity might be labeled as HRD. To avoid confusion, use of the terms HRD and CPE will be confined to activities associated with professional bodies and are used to describe internal learning activities that are not linked to any professional body initiative. Although the terms are being separated for purposes of discussion, the lines may actually blur in practice.

Traditions and Assumptions: CPE

The term continuing assumes that there is some further development of initial training, a smooth transition (rare in many professions), and subsequent career progress (often problematic because of lack of jobs, family-unfriendly conditions of employment, or limited mobility). However, even a cursory glance at the practices of initial and CPE suggests profound discontinuity of emphasis and tradition, separate personnel, and different structures and modes of organization. The greatest influences on CPE are the histories and current trajectories of the professions. These indicate that the distinctive features claimed for professional workers include:
A body of formal knowledge acquired through professional education required for membership and sustained by CPE. However, such knowledge is now recognized as being mostly necessary but far from sufficient, hence the recent emphasis on competencies learned on the job for professionals as well as other workers and the continuing debate about the nature of the relationship between theory and practice.

Authority based on specialist knowledge and expertise. When professions are very powerful (e.g., law and medicine), their authority is very strong within their own domains. However, weak professions can only assert collective negative power on a few contentious issues.

Accountability to their clients through adherence to a professional code of conduct, which normally covers both ethical principles and obligations to maintain competence through ongoing learning. On the positive side, the professions provide additional learning programs, networks, and resources to those provided by employers. On the negative side, there are doubts about their ability to enforce their requirements for maintaining competence. Employers often see the more powerful professions as a rival source of power and authority, which might divert professional learning efforts away from their own priorities.

Traditions and Assumptions: HRD

HRD has been defined historically as incorporating training, career development, and organization development activities (McLaglan, 1989). HRD has also been defined as “organized learning experiences provided by employers within a specified period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth” (L. Nadler & Nadler, 1989, p. 6). Swanson and Holton (2001) identified 18 definitions of HRD, noting that HRD borrows from several theoretical disciplines including psychology, systems theory, economics, and human performance technology. Weinberger (1998) concluded that there have been at least 20 definitions of HRD forwarded and analyzed and most of them describe a role heavily focused on training and adult education. Swanson and Holton suggested that the field is establishing itself as a discipline, yet it is questionable whether HRD is best considered as a true discipline or as an applied field.

HRD professionals work to build capacity in individuals, teams, and organizations ideally using a systemic approach with a long-term focus. HRD has many orientations and influences and is considered a young and emerging practice. There is no uniformity about HRD's aims, goals, or underlying philosophy. Gilley, Dean, and Bierema (2001) suggested that the field is divided and that its practitioners and scholars align themselves with organizational learning, performance, or change. There is also debate over whether HRD should be individually focused (Bierema, 1996), organizationally focused (Swanson & Arnold, 1996), or both (Bierema, 2000). Even the appropriateness of HRD's name has been recently challenged (Ruona, 2002; Walton, 2002), and there is no agreement about whether the field should be specifically defined (Ruona, 2000; Russ-Eft, 2000). Further, scholars of adult education have criticized the term human performance as having controlling and capitalist tendencies that may exploit employee learning for organization benefit. In HRD, people are often referred to as the organization's most important resource in recognition of the important knowledge and learning they bring to the organization. Russ-Eft (2000) argued that differences emerge based on the degree of emphasis put on the words resource and development by
scholars and practitioners. She noted that conflicts emerge when it is debated whether to emphasize human development or resource development. The HRD field has long debated the potential conflict between the learning and performance paradigms.

Questioning the Assumptions of CPE and HRD

It is the authors’ contention that research into workplace learning indicates that both CPE and HRD practices tend to persist with dysfunctional assumptions that significantly reduce their effectiveness. CPE fails to give sufficient attention to the more complex representations of personal knowledge, skills, and competencies that have emerged during the last decade. HRD fails to give sufficient attention to the complexities of organizational life-power relations, micro-politics, and the pervasive influence of cultures and subcultures that limit the envisaged tight coupling between decisions and intended outcomes. Both CPE and HRD are inclined to use attractive innovations and euphemistic terminology as substitutes for proper investigations of factors affecting workplace learning and fail to recognize that most learning in the workplace occurs independently of CPE or HRD programs (Eraut, Alderton, Cole, & Senker, 2000). One reason for this is the prevailing assumption that learning and working are separate activities. This may sometimes be true, but very often learning and working occur at the same time and sometimes, as in problem solving, they are identical.

Both CPE and HRD are strongly, but not solely, concerned with improving the capabilities of individual workers. A common weakness lies in the conceptions of capability that underpin their work. CPE suffers from the profession’s historical tradition of qualifications based on (a) written examinations of academic knowledge and (b) assessments of practice based on supervisor reports and/or competency tests. Though claiming to be valid and comprehensive, the scope of these assessments is usually rather narrow and one could safely predict that many aspects of performance discussed by a well-informed appraiser of a newly qualified professional would lie outside the domain of the qualification. Moreover, there is an inherent contradiction between the complexities disclosed by recent research into professional expertise and the limited duration of most CPE programs. HRD has tended to adopt a similar conception of knowledge but gives it less priority, focusing more on skills and competencies. However, these bring similar problems of conception, which are then compounded by the deceptive role of common concepts and terminology. People recognize and use the same words but do not give them the same meanings, and there is usually an implicit assumption about the transferability of skills and competences that is unconfirmed by independent evidence.

Stakeholders and Priorities for CPE and HRD

The stakeholders of CPE and HRD are listed in Table 1 in an order that facilitates comparison. The priorities accorded to these stakeholders are the subject of considerable debate with critics arguing that professions are too focused on their own self-interest and that corporate culture disregards the public interest and sometimes their own employees, as well. Historically, individual professionals have been given priority in CPE. It is less common for CPE to be requested or provided above the individual level, and this is a major barrier to meeting the needs of either colleagues or users, that is, most of the stakeholders. The problem lies in the assumption that changes in individual performance can be effective without any concomitant changes in the practices of
colleagues, administrative support, organizational structure, or culture. The professions are now beginning to give much more attention to accountability issues, especially where legal or political challenges are involved, but the focus remains on the interests of individual members and maintaining the reputation of the profession as a whole. Changes in corporate culture seem less likely because of the pervasive interest of their shareholders.

TABLE 1: Stakeholders in Continuing Professional Education (CPE) and Human Resource Development (HRD)

Other factors affecting CPE or HRD priorities are:

* whether the focus is on this year, next year, or the medium- to long-term future;

* estimates of costs and probable benefits; and

* the problem(s) being addressed.

HRD professionals often straddle the competing goals of employers and employees. Hence, it is difficult for them to operate effectively without negotiating some alignment between individual, group, and organizational needs over a long period of time. Thus, HRD is more effective when it is linked to organizational strategy over the long term. However, in practice, both CPE and HRD efforts are often fragmented, individually oriented, nonstrategic, and short lived.

Determining the costs and benefits of HRD can be challenging for several reasons. First, many aspects of learning are difficult to measure. Second, so many other factors change over longer periods of time that it is virtually impossible to attribute performance outcomes to particular learning programs. Third, less tangible and longer-term benefits are difficult to estimate. Finally, even costs can be difficult to estimate in some situations, especially where follow-up is integrated with ongoing work.

Another important consideration is that CPE or HRD are often designed to address a particular problem (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Adopting a problem orientation involves using careful analysis to identify root causes. Failing to properly analyze the organization system can result in faulty HRD. For example, training is often prescribed when the organization is not performing optimally but other interventions would be more appropriate. Thus, employee training to increase productivity will not correct bad management decisions or organizational strategies and structures that have a negative impact on productivity.

Foci for CPE and HRD
Table 2 presents a summary of CPE and HRD foci for comparison and discussion. The foci for HRD and CPE include learning, knowledge, performance, strategy, and change. These foci influence HRD and CPE to varying degrees depending on the problem being addressed, the organization context, and the practitioner(s) concerned. Although separated in this discussion, they overlap and influence each other in practice. HRD and CPE will be compared one focus at a time, sometimes taking them together and sometimes separately.

**Learning Focus**

The learning focus is concerned with fostering learning at individual, group, and organizational levels. Although there is no agreement about the role of adult education and learning in HRD, learning is considered to be of great importance by HRD scholars. Ruona (2000) reported that all 10 of the HRD scholars she interviewed about their philosophy and perspectives on the field felt that learning was at the heart of HRD. Watkins (2000) identified the process of fostering learning and change in organizations as a key challenge of HRD. The learning paradigm of HRD is concerned with facilitating learning and development of participants and values change as part of the learning process and also as affecting performance. This emphasis on learning is shared within CPE, but it is often given less priority than knowledge. Moreover, CPE gives far less attention to learning at group and organizational levels. One reason for this may be the ambiguous position of those who have the dual role of professional practitioner and manager. The prevailing tendency is for practitioner learning to be the main focus of CPE, whereas management learning is more likely to be prioritized and provided by employers under the auspices of their HRD function.

Perhaps the most critical issues at any level are those which determine and prioritize learning needs with what kind of consultation and at what level of detail. CPE tends to favor a market model in which providers advertise conferences, courses, and workshops, and interested professionals either seek financial support and/or time off from their employers or pay their own expenses and claim tax relief. HRD has tended to use a training-needs model focused on performance (see below), in which the contribution of employees to the learning needs analysis varies widely according to the organizational culture and the area of concern. In between comes a range of less formalized arrangements for sharing expertise with much less emphasis on prespecification of precisely what knowledge is involved. CPE provides some opportunities for sharing practitioners’ experiences across organizations. HRD concentrates on sharing experiences within a single organization, but this will sometimes mean assembling practitioners or, more likely, managers from different sites or even different countries. Internal sharing of expertise is more likely to be described as CPE in profession-dominated organizations and as HRD in other organizations.
The concept of a learning organization began to be used in the mid-1980s. Watkins and Marsick (1993) defined it as an organization that learns continuously and can transform itself, whereas Senge (1990) referred to organizations that develop as through a process of systems thinking, personal mastery, changing mental models, and developing a shared vision and team learning. Strategies for developing this dimension of organizational life are discussed below under the organization focus.

One outcome of this interest in learning organizations has been that managers are increasingly expected to foster the learning of their staff. However, this is often interpreted rather narrowly and is limited to the selection, support for, and, perhaps, follow-up of learning opportunities provided under the auspices of HRD or CPE. Managers rarely receive any training for this role or for the facilitation of informal learning or group learning (Eraut et al., 1999).

**Knowledge Focus**

This focus incorporates capturing and sharing individual, professional, and organization knowledge. This has been the main priority of CPE since its inception, in which it has been traditionally associated with the concept of updating (Willis & Dubin, 1990). This applies to new research, legislation, policies, and practices. Several professional bodies have made this a major component of their accountability to the public by making a certain level of participation in CPE a condition for continuing membership. This usually involves awarding credit for a range of approved CPE activities and some restrictions on the acceptable mix as well as a minimum annual amount. However, this does not usually involve any assessment of performance, and its focus is mainly on publicly available codified knowledge (sometimes before publication) and publicly evaluated practices. This supports the notion of a profession being defined by its collective knowledge base and initial qualification rather than the quality of performance of its practitioners.

HRD scholars and practitioners are concerned with developing systems that capture and share knowledge. In HRD, the knowledge focus is mainly applied at an organization level as increasing attention is given to the concepts of knowledge-based organizations, knowledge assets, and knowledge management. The introduction of knowledge management, in particular, appears to have brought CPE and HRD closer together, but it has not brought any new thinking to the problems of representing capability and expertise, which was previously discussed in the earlier questioning of current assumptions in the CPE and HRD traditions. It has simply ignored both the failure of expert systems research to deliver improved techniques for knowledge representation and the more sophisticated approaches that followed in its wake, which give more attention to implicit cultural knowledge and the tacit nature of much personal knowledge (Eraut, 2001). Knowledge management systems can use knowledge that is already formalized and codified and may even include verbal descriptions or video recordings of skilled action, but they do not address the following questions:

* What knowledge do people need to be able to use the knowledge on the knowledge-management system?
What does a person need to know to perform a skilled action in the right way, in the right place, at the right time, and appropriately fine-tuned to the particular situation?

How much of any particular performance is potentially transferable, and how much is person specific, situation specific, or both?

Where does knowledge reside, and how is it best captured and shared in the organization?

Performance Focus

This focus is oriented toward improving performance on individual, group, and organization levels. Performance is concerned with resource development to make the organization profitable. Performance is defined as an accomplishment that is valued (Gilbert, 1978). Swanson and Arnold (1996) advocated improving performance as HRD's principal purpose, and they stated, "Performance-focused HRD is simply to ensure that the HRD process in organizations contributes to the goals of the organization system in which it operates" (p. 17). Using this definition, performance is the means by which organizations measure their goals.

HRD is most often judged by its impact on the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. The main criteria for judging such impacts are normally efficiency (productivity), effectiveness (which may or may not subsume quality), and economy (unit costs). Deciding on the appropriate balance between these three factors is usually a matter of corporate judgment within the context of the organization's mission and strategy. For example, in private sector organizations, a short-term profit strategy will require a different balance from a long-term growth strategy, and ultimate success will depend on the organization's competitiveness in the market with its chosen strategy. In public sector organizations, such strategic decisions will concern the range and quality of its services and the number of clients/customers it is expected to serve. Although its management may put forward one or two strategic options, the final decision will be made by a board led by politicians that are accountable to an electorate. Their electorate will be concerned about both the cost (in their role as taxpayers) and the quality of the processes and outcomes experienced by themselves and their friends and relations. In practice, there may be no realistic, alternative choice of suppliers (i.e., no market). In both private and public organizations, performance criteria are likely to vary according to each stakeholder's interests and experiences.

The measurement of performance and its interpretation will always encounter several problems, in particular:

* the level(s) at which performance should be measured (individual, group, organization);

* the aspects of performance being measured (usually it covers only a narrow range of performance activities and outcomes, and the development goals of CPE and HRD may suffer from selective neglect);

* the timescales for measuring any intended changes in performance may be too short to allow for learning from early experiences of changes and tuning of new practices;
* searching for positive and negative side effects that might affect judgments of overall costs and benefits; and

* assessing the impact on performance outcomes of other changes, planned or unexpected, that took place over the same period.

Giving serious attention to these issues requires that HRD practitioners, who normally carry responsibility for planning HRD interventions, have a deep understanding of the organizational system in which they work. Thus, Stolovitch and Keeps (1999) argued that the HRD practitioner must identify and analyze factors within the organizational system that may affect performance and the consequences of employee performance (rewards and punishments) to uncover root causes of inadequacies so that a performance solution can be constructed to address them.

Historically, CPE has given less attention to performance issues, partly because CPE providers have little knowledge of the factors that might affect an individual's performance in any particular workplace. However, CPE is beginning to attend to quality factors, and evaluations of CPE programs are increasingly being expected to measure their ultimate impact on service users.

**Strategic Focus**

This focus involves moving HRD away from a support role to one that plays a pivotal role in shaping business strategy. Traditional HRD managed by a separate HRD office is almost bound to cause business plans and HRD plans to drift apart. However, strategic HRD is integrated into an organization's mission and incorporated into all major planning initiatives. Responsibility and accountability for HRD are shared by people at all levels and within all functions of the organization, and it is implemented in a formal, systematic, and holistic fashion across the organization. This requires that HRD specialists adopt consultancy roles and provide advice to managers without letting them delegate their core responsibility for learning, and both managers and HRD specialists need preparation for their new roles. Hence, strategic HRD is concerned with the development of particular HRD competencies such as taking a strategic planning approach to HRD activities, developing strategic business and management partnerships, accurately diagnosing organizational needs, developing performance interventions, facilitating learning acquisition and transfer, and measuring performance improvement and organizational results (Gilley & Maycunich, 1998).

CPE has given much less attention to strategic issues, and this causes many problems for professional workers. In particular, it needs to attend to the issues of specifying and providing a quality service and giving greater priority to user perspectives. The key aspects of user-focused practice are assessing user needs, negotiating with users, and ongoing professional relationships with users. Learning to perform these processes better should be the main strategic focus of user-focused CPE. Once user needs are understood and continuing relationships with users have the desired quality, the focus can shift to changing practices at all levels to meet those needs while continuing to monitor the processes that result. This will require both close alignment with strategic HRD and a greater focus on learning at group and organizational levels. This is especially important in health care organizations because of their multiprofessional character. Not only is there lack of alignment with HRD but there are separate CPE
policies and practices for each professional group. This has spawned a growing movement for interprofessional education.

**Organization Change Focus**

This focus involves creating the process to facilitate change and the infrastructure to sustain it as well as designing systems that promote organization effectiveness and efficiency. Organizations are dynamic and complex social systems formed to accomplish goals. HRD views the organization as a system that influences the performance of the individual. Factors considered in organizational change include the people performing their jobs, the measurement of the performance, the processes that make up the tasks the people perform, the systems that comprise the processes, the arrangements of the hierarchy and reporting relationships that make up the formal structure, the informal structure professionals create for themselves, and how the strategy of the organization aligns itself to all the aforementioned factors (Miles & Snow, 1978; D. Nadler, Gerstein, & Shaw, 1992). There are several approaches to organizational development that serve to analyze systems, diagnose problems, develop interventions, implement changes, and evaluate progress. However, such organizationally focused interventions tend to overlook the learning tasks involved in undertaking organization-level change. In particular, they need to consider:

* the emotional disorientation caused by temporary incompetence when old practices are abandoned and new practices have not yet settled,

* the appropriate balance between formal and informal learning, and

* how best to support learning from early experiences and the fine-tuning of new practices.

Such considerations should also inform the pacing of change (e.g., to what extent should it be big bang or incremental and over what period of time?), the flexibility with which it is implemented, the anticipation of possible problems, and being able to respond to them quickly if they occur. Thus, organizational change, which neglects the learning implications for workers both before and after the change process, is almost doomed to disaster.

**A More Appropriate Epistemology for Workplace Learning?**

Both knowledge and learning can be examined from two perspectives: the individual and the social. An individual perspective on knowledge and learning enables us to explore both differences in what and how people learn and differences in how they interpret what they learn. A social perspective draws attention to the social construction of knowledge and of contexts for learning and to the wide range of cultural practices and products that provide knowledge resources for learning. In universities, for example, the most prominent of these resources are (a) the codified academic knowledge embedded in texts and databases and (b) the cultural practices of teaching, studentship, scholarship, and research. The main criteria for evaluating academic knowledge are acceptance and truth. Each publication outlet of status has editors and referees controlling acceptance, using criteria of originality, and, in journals of a more scientific nature, truth according to the parameters of the community from which the publication draws its readership.
Criteria for evaluating codified knowledge that is neither academic nor public, such as organization-specific information, records, correspondence, manuals, or plans, are more likely to have authenticity, accuracy, and utility.

Most cultural knowledge, however, has not been codified but still plays a key role in most work-based practices and activities. There is considerable debate about the extent to which such knowledge can be made explicit or represented in any textual form, with Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) being far more optimistic than Spender (1998) or Eraut (2000). What does appear to be generally acknowledged is that much uncodified cultural knowledge is acquired informally through participation in social activities, and much is often so taken for granted that people are unaware of its influence on their behavior. Nevertheless, for professionals in health care or those involved in marketing and sales, cultural knowledge is critical for understanding the aspirations, needs, and behaviors of their clients or customers and for relating to them in the most culturally appropriate ways (Eraut, in press). For managers, it is an important aspect of their relations with those they manage. For those concerned with organizational change, there is a need to understand the influence of cultural knowledge within the organization itself and how it is constructed, monitored, and used by different organizational subcultures. The issue is not the truth of that knowledge but whether workers have the understanding of it that they need. Thus, the evaluation criteria applied to these uncodified and less explicit forms of cultural knowledge are likely to be authentic and of situational significance. What is its distribution, and possibly differential interpretation, across a range of cultural groups? Who was involved in its construction over time? How has it developed from, and how is it now positioned in relation to, other cultural knowledge? What different forms does it take? How is it evolving?

As a counterpart to cultural knowledge, Eraut (2001) defined personal knowledge as what individual persons bring to situations that enables them to think, interact, and perform. Such knowledge is not only acquired through learning to use public codified knowledge through skills training and through social acculturation, but it is also constructed from personal experience, reflection, and social interaction. Thus, it includes everyday knowledge of people and situations, know-how in the form of skills and practices, memories of episodes and events, self-knowledge, attitudes and emotions, and more widely recognized aspects of knowledge. More importantly, however, such knowledge is rarely used piecemeal or one kind at a time. The knowledge one uses has to be already available in an integrated form and ready for action, and this implies a holistic rather than fragmented approach to knowledge and its acquisition.

The organization possesses cultural knowledge as well, which is collectively held among the organization members. Dixon (1994) suggested that organizations have collective meaning structures that may include norms, strategies, and assumptions about work. She proposed a knowledge hierarchy that begins with individual, private meaning structures. Private meaning structures contain knowledge that the member is unwilling to share with others. This could include confidential information or evidence of mistakes and incompetence. The next level is accessible meaning structures, or knowledge that individuals are willing to share with the organization. Organization learning happens through these accessible meaning structures thus evolving into collective meaning structures.
The advantage of this alternative epistemology is that personal knowledge is the basis of individuals’ capabilities, although their performance will also depend on other workplace factors. Further, collective knowledge is the basis of the organization’s capabilities. Research into the nature of such capabilities is difficult for three reasons: (a) our inadequate approaches to describing it (people fail to recognize that more than one mode of representation is needed to describe complex, real-world phenomena), (b) individual workers’ inability to communicate their own personal knowledge because so much of it is taken for granted or tacit (Eraut, 2000), and (c) our inability to understand the complex and dynamic nature of organizational knowledge. Nevertheless, research into workplace learning reveals that a large proportion of personal knowledge is acquired through experiences that are quite independent of any CPD or HRD initiatives, and this applies to senior executives (McCall, Lombarde, & Morrison, 1988) as well as early-or mid-career professionals (Eraut et al., 2000, 2003). Moreover, there is evidence from these and other studies that such workplace learning is facilitated or hindered by factors that are not usually addressed by CPD or HRD but could be so addressed if they focused on the enhancement of informal workplace learning as much as on the delivery of programs.

HRD often engineers organization change, and lasting change occurs most effectively when accompanied by learning. Yet, HRD practices often fall short of providing thorough analysis, supporting learning, introducing appropriate interventions, respecting the culture and power dynamics, and conducting judicious evaluation. The field is sometimes guilty of adopting the latest management fads and may often view problems as curable by applying human performance technology; team building; analysis, diagnosis, intervention development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE); or learning organization to name a few popular HRD interventions.

Organizations are highly complex entities, and HRD sometimes lacks sophistication in relating learning to organization change and vice versa. Although HRD should ideally be implemented with a systems and long-term focus, organization pressures often cause these standards to be compromised in the pursuit of quick results, improved short-term profitability, and temporary fixes to problems.

Organization-level learning is often concerned with facilitating organization change and development that optimizes performance. This level adopts a systems approach aiming for interventions that are strategic and that either solve organizational problems or seek opportunities. Organization approaches generally involve a linear process of analysis, diagnosis, intervention development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE) that may have limitations in addressing organization complexity, power and interpersonal dynamics, and organization culture.

Although HRD has several formulas for addressing individual and organization change (e.g., instructional systems development [ISD]; ADDIE; learning models; action research; planned change; field theory; performance improvement; and learning organization models), the field has not addressed the stark realities of how HRD intersects with the organization political climate or how HRD practitioners can function amidst the power dynamics that regularly pit them between employees and management. Yet, understanding how to negotiate power relationships may be the most fundamental skill an HRD practitioner can possess. After all, no amount of learning facilitation is going to address debilitating power relations. Many HRD models offer an instrumental
understanding of how to do basic HRD activities such as training, planning, or analysis. What is needed is a model that appreciates the intricacies of power, politics, and culture.

The authors of this article argue that both CPE and HRD overlook the influence and impact of culture on learning. Schein (1992) suggested that understanding culture yields a deeper appreciation for the way it affects the thinking, feeling, and actions of its members. Schein defined culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of adaptation to the external environment. Culture defines how members perceive, behave, think, and feel about their environment. It is a learned value system or structure for solving problems that is passed down from old members to new members. It significantly affects the thinking, values, and actions of its members. Not only does culture affect the content of what people learn at work, but it also affects the process.

CPE and HRD are both concerned with increasing the capabilities of workers but have different foci and methods. CPE tends to be more individually oriented, whereas HRD is more organizationally focused. Neither approach fully appreciates the complexities of the professions and organizations. This limitation prevents full understanding and facilitation of organizational learning. Both traditions have perspectives on learning, knowledge, performance, strategy, and organization change that are mutually beneficial. HRD and CPE will be better served by building traditions that attend to both individual and social factors. The role of cultural and personal knowledge in shaping workplace learning must move to the foreground if either field is to fully affect workplace learning.

[Reference]
References
presented at the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) biannual conference, Padua, Italy.


[Reference]

[Author Affiliation]
Laura L. Bierema is an associate professor at the University of Georgia, School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning, Department of Adult Education. Her primary assignment is with the Human Resource and Organization Development Program. Her articles have appeared in both prestigious research and professional publications. She is a Cyril O. Houle Scholar in Adult and Continuing Education as well as a Lilly Fellow. She is also the 1998 recipient of the Richard A. Swanson Excellence in Research Award. Michael Eraut is a professor of education at the University of Sussex. His research has focused on the nature of professional knowledge, the role of tacit knowledge in professional practice, how professionals learn in the workplace, and factors affecting learning in professional apprenticeships. He is editor-in-chief of the journal Learning in Health and Social Care, and is author of Developing Professional Knowledge and Competence (1994). He has also published 9 research monographs as well as some 30 journal articles and chapters.

Indexing (document details)
Subjects: Continuing education, Professional development, Human resource management, Learning, Work environment, Organizational change
Classification Codes 9190, 6200, 2500
Locations: United States, US
Author(s): Laura L Bierema, Michael Eraut
Document types: Feature
Document features: references, tables
Publication title: Advances in Developing Human Resources. San Francisco: Feb 2004. Vol. 6, Iss. 1; pg. 52
Source type: Periodical
ISSN: 15234223
ProQuest document ID: 535022951
Text Word Count 6507