Adult Learning Within Human Resource Development

The disciplines of human resource development (HRD) and adult education (AE) both view the process of adult learning as being central to their theory and practice. Even so, the purposes of HRD and AE differ, and their perspective on adult learning differs. The core difference is related to control of the goals and purposes for which adult learning is employed—organizational versus individual control. This chapter looks closely at HRD, the role of adult learning within HRD, and the issue of control.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Human resource development professionals are in general agreement as to their goals. Most take the position that HRD should focus on increasing the performance requirements of its host organizations through the development of the organization's workforce (ASTDUSDL, 1990; Knowles, 1990; McLagan 1989; Swanson, 1995).

Others believe HRD should focus on individual development and personal fulfillment without using organizational performance as the measure of worth (Dirkx, 1996). Yet, it is the increase in performance resulting from HRD that justifies its existence. From either perspective, the question of contribution always comes into play.

Holton (1998) provides a very useful taxonomy of "performance outcomes" and "performance drivers" that accommodates the gap between those focused on the organization first and then the individual versus those focused on the individual first and then the organization. He informs HRD professionals to pay attention to both *performance outcomes* and *performance drivers*. Thus, organization *performance*, such as high-quality services delivered to external customers, can be logically connected to *performance drivers*, such as learning and process improvement (see Chapter 17 for a more complete explanation).

When practiced within productive organizations, human resource development should strive to contribute directly to the host organization's goals. The host organization is a purposeful system that must attain effective and efficient survival goals. Consequently, it is the responsibility of HRD to focus on those goals as well as individual employee goals.

Human resource development can be thought of as a sub-system that functions within the larger organizational system. An *organization* is defined as a productive enterprise having a mission and goals (Holton, 1997). Additionally, an organization is system, with definable

inputs, processes, outputs, parts, and purposes (Rummler and Brache, 1995). Contemporary HRD literature consistently talks of linking HRD to the strategic goals of the organization (see, for example, Gill, 1995). If HRD is to be respected and useful in organizations, it must position itself as a strategic partner and achieve the same level of importance as traditional core organizational processes, such as finance, production, and marketing (Torraco and Swanson, 1995). To gain an understanding of the purpose of the HRD sub-system, the goals of the larger system in which it operates should be considered.

Of the scarce resources that organizations must procure and allocate, perhaps none is more important to the success of the firm than human resources (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997). A major expenditure for most organizations is tied directly to workers, including wages, benefits, and HRD (Becker, 1993; Noe et al., 1994). And although human resources are unique in that people have feelings, make plans, support families, and develop communities, they are in some ways similar to other resources: Firms expect a return on the money invested in their employees (Cascio, 1987). Unless workers

contribute to the profitability and viability of an organization, it would make economic sense to invest the money elsewhere. Even in nonprofit organizations, employees must contribute meaningfully to organizational goals that are essential to survival, even though those goals are not stated in dollars of profit.

The purpose of reviewing this basic reality of organizational survival is not to paint an unfeeling picture of the workplace in which people are merely cogs in a mechanistic machine. There are numerous examples of companies that meet their organizational goals that are also among the most progressive in terms of employee treatment and relations (Levering and Moskowitz, 1994). Nowhere has it been shown that organizational success should be in direct conflict with employee happiness and well-being.

Performance, then, is defined as the *organizational system outputs that have value to the customer in the form of productivity attributable to the organization, work process, and/or individual contributor levels*. Using this definition, performance is the means by which organizations measure their goals. Performance can be measured in many ways: rate of return, cycle time, and quality of output are three such possibilities. Additionally, it is important to make the distinction between levels of performance. Performance takes place and can be measured at the organizational, process, and individual levels.

If HRD is to be aligned with the goals and strategies of the organization, and performance is the primary means by which the goals and strategies of organizations are realized, then it follows that HRD should be first and foremost concerned with maintaining and/or improving performance at the organizational, process, and individual levels. If HRD is to be a value-added activity of the firm (instead of a line item of cost that is to be controlled and minimized), then HRD practitioners must be concerned about performance and how

it enables organizations to achieve their goals.

HRD AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

How can HRD improve performance? There are many possibilities
at the individual, process, and organizational levels. Figure 8-1
is a matrix of performance levels and variables that can aid in the
diagnosis of performance problems (Swanson, 1996, p. 52). Within

each cell are enabling questions that permit diagnosis of performance,
but each cell can also serve as a conceptual framework for classifying
performance interventions.

As an example, the mission/goal variable at the organizational
level asks whether the organization's mission and goals fit various
internal and external realities. If they do not, then most likely performance
is being impeded. Assume that an organization's mission
and goals do not fit the reality of its culture and this is resulting in

PERFORMANCE
VARIABLES
PERFORMANCE LEVELS
Mission/Goal
System Design
Capacity
Motivation
Expertise Does the organization
establish and maintain
selection and training
policies and resources?
Do the policies, culture,
and reward systems
support the desired
performance?
Does the organization
have the leadership,
capital, and
infrastructure to
achieve its
mission/goals?
Does the organizational
system provide
structure and policies
supporting the desired
performance?
Does the organization's
mission/goal fit the
reality of the economic,
political, and cultural
forces?
Organizational Level
Does the
process of
developing
expertise meet
the changing
demands of
changing
processes?
Does the
process provide
the information
and human
factors required
to maintain it?
Does the
process have

the capacity to
perform(quantity,
quality, and
timeliness)?
Are processes
designed in
such a way to
work as a
system?
Do the process
goals enable the
organization to
meet
organizational
and individual
missions/goals?
Process Level
Does the
individual have
the knowledge,
skills, and
experience to
perform?
Does the
individual want to
perform no matter
what?
Does the
individual have
the mental,
physical, and
emotional
capacity to
perform?
Do individuals
face obstacles that
impede their job
performance?
Are the
professional and
personal
mission/goals of
individuals
congruent with
the organization's?
Individual Level

Figure 8-1. *Performance diagnosis matrix of enabling questions.*
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sub-optimized performance. HRD could attempt to solve this performance problem through structured intervention in a couple of ways, depending on the outcomes of detailed analysis. A process could be put in place to formulate mission and goals that accommodate the organizational culture. On the other hand, a cultural change process could be implemented to modify the culture so that it is better aligned with the mission and goals of the organization. This example and the performance diagnosis matrix show that numerous impediments to performance, and consequently numerous challenges and opportunities for HRD to improve performance, exist.

When business and industry leaders talk about the high values of core competence to the life of their companies, they are talking primarily about knowledge and expertise that fits within and between the 15 cells in the performance diagnosis matrix. This learning can also be categorized as public knowledge, industry-specific knowledge,

or firm-specific knowledge that is critical to sustaining organizational performance (Leonard-Barton, 1995, p. 21).

Notice that *adult learning* plays an important role in most, if not all, of the matrix cells. Just getting to the point of doing the work in each diagnostic cell of the organizational system requires much to be learned in order to understand and operate within and between these cells. For example, if HRD is to change culture, then certainly the principles and practices of adult learning will play an important role as employees develop and learn new norms. Most process improvement strategies embrace some form of self-directed teams that examine their work processes and learn better ways to perform them.

Building leadership capacity is a learning process. In organizations where innovation is a key performance driver, learning becomes central to survival (Senge, 1990; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). It is not difficult to see that there are potential needs for adult learning within every cell of the performance diagnosis matrix.

One important strategic role for HRD is to build the organization's strategic capability—the knowledge and expertise required to figure out the present and to develop rational scenarios of the future and ways to connect them (Torraco and Swanson, 1995). Adult learning, from this perspective, is critical in order to maintain the performance of an existing system and to improve on that system. Increasingly, it is an organization's intellectual capital that leads to sustained competitive advantage (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997;

Stewart, 1997). Adult learning becomes a powerful organizational improvement strategy when it is embedded in a holistic performance improvement system framework.

HRD AND ADULT LEARNING

The issue of control—organizational versus individual—is useful in exploring the role of adult learning in HRD. Cervero and Wilson help in their book, *Planning Responsibly for Adult Education: A Guide to Negotiating Power and Interests* (1994), by noting that the AE (adult education) literature has been "focused on technical, 'how to' skills, while presupposing some ideally neutral staging area in which these skills will be exercised, and have remained surprisingly silent on the troublesome issues of 'what for' and 'for whom.'" They go on to speak more forcefully, "Which people get to decide the purpose, content, and format of the program? Is it always the people with the most power? Is it the adults who will participate in the program, the leadership of the institution sponsoring the program, or the planners themselves?" (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. xii).

So what is the relationship between HRD and adult learning? Swanson (1996) defines *human resource development* as a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organizational development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance at the organization, work process, and individual levels. McLagan (1989) offers an earlier definition of HRD along similar lines: the integrated use of training and development, organizational development and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness. In

both definitions, it is apparent that the outcome of HRD is *performance improvement*. It should be equally apparent that *learning*—knowledge and expertise—is a core component of HRD but not the whole of HRD.

Human resource development is broader than training or adult learning. There are HRD interventions that involve much more than training or learning activities, and some can have no planned educational component. This aspect of HRD falls in the "unleashing" element of the definition. For example, HRD might be involved in improving a business process intended to result in a newly engineered business process and minor work method modifications that

are transparent to the worker. They could require no formal learning effort to implement. If training were required, it would be a relatively small part of the entire intervention. One could attempt to argue that the HRD work to improve the process involves acts of learning and is therefore adult learning. The rebuttal is that the desired outcome is to improve the process rather than the learning in individuals working in the business process.

These remarks should not be construed as an argument that the discipline of AE is a subset of HRD. It is not. Although adult learning takes places in both HRD and AE and both are deeply committed to adult learning, HRD and AE are discrete disciplines. Their area of intersection occurs within adult learning. When adult learning outcomes and learning process decisions about individuals are bounded by rules and requirements of the organization, adult learning is HRD. When the adult learning outcomes and learning process rules and requirements are located in the individual, it is AE. The core difference is in the idea of control. If the organization retains the authority to approve or disapprove learning interventions, the control is with the organization, and therefore it is HRD. To the point that control is overtly and formally shared, the learning process is both AE and HRD (Swanson and Arnold, 1996). For example, Robinson and Stern (1997) offer vivid illustrations of two essential elements that foster corporate creativity and encourage employees to control their learning journey. They speak of "self-initiated activity" (an activity performed by an individual who is not asked to do it) and "unofficial activity" (an activity performed by an individual over a period of time in which he continues to work on his learning journey without direct official recognition and/or support) and the benefits organizations gain by allowing these to take place among workers.

Thus, some HRD processes and interventions do not focus on adult learning. By the same token, AE does not always take place in the context of organizations for the purpose of performance improvement. The outcome of AE can be personal growth, general knowledge, or even amusement.

For HRD, adult learning focuses on development interventions that have two attributes: First, the context is organizational, and second, the desired outcome is learning—knowledge and expertise—that will impact the performance goals of the host organization.

Facilitating adult learning in performance-oriented organizations
often creates a tension between the assumptions underlying andragogical
practice and the organization's performance requirements.
For many, best adult education practices allow maximum individual
control and appeal directly to the needs most meaningful to the individual
(Hiemstra and Sisco, 1990). When the individual's needs are
consistent with the organization's needs, there is no tension. When
the individual's needs and goals are not congruent with the organization's
performance requirements, and the organization is providing
the required learning experience, a tension exists and inevitably
results in some degree of organizational control.
For this reason, learning professionals in HRD must balance practices
that lead to the most effective adult learning with those that will
lead to performance outcomes. When learning is required, performance
will be compromised if effective adult learning principles are
not incorporated. However, learning will also be compromised without
an emphasis on performance principles because the learning
opportunities will likely be discontinued if performance outcomes
are not achieved.
Effective HRD professionals have the ability to find the optimum
balance in each situation. Fortunately, the majority of learning situations
present no problem. In many cases, the best interests of the
employee and the organization can be met at the same time. This is
especially true in organizations that link employee career advancement
to performance so that employees' lives are enhanced as the
organization's performance improves.
But there are other instances where adult learning principles can
not be wholly implemented. Consider organizational change, for
example. Can a large organization in a survival mode allow individuals
the freedom to choose whether they want to learn a new way to
run the organization? Hardly. Can an organization continue to
invest in learning programs for its employees that do not lead to performance
improvement over the long run? No.
In summary, HRD has a great concern to create more humane
organizations. However, by definition, HRD must ensure that the
organization's performance improvement needs are met. At certain
points, this is likely to lead to some adaptation and compromise of
the core andragogical principles. Effective application of adult learning
principles in HRD requires practitioners to become comfortable

with, and even embrace, the tension between adult learning and performance
principles.

THE PREMISE OF INDIVIDUALS CONTROLLING THEIR OWN LEARNING

One of the most popular ideas in AE is that individuals want to
have control over their learning based on their personal goals and
that learning will increase as a result. The idea is that better outcomes
result when the learner retains control throughout the learning
phases. There is controversy related to this idea of how much

control individual learners want and can handle.
During the 1980s there was considerable discussion about embracing self-directed learning as a unifying theory and goal for the discipline of AE. Even one of the leading proponents, Stephen Brookfield (1988), acknowledged that self-directed learning is far more complex than first proposed, and that the push in AE to embrace self-directed learning was motivated in part by the discipline's search for an identity and unifying theory.
The point of this discussion is not to enter the AE debate about self-directed learning. It must be recognized that the core assumptions of andragogy do not raise learner self-directedness to the same high level as has been proposed by many AE theorists and practitioners. Andragogy suggests that adults have a *self-concept* of being responsible or their own lives and expect others to treat them as being capable of self-direction (see Chapter 4). Adult education suggests that the purpose of learning should be to develop self-directed learning capacity in adults (Brookfield, 1986). The self-concept principle in adult learning theory has consistently been confused with the democratic humanism goals of AE that all adults become self-directing. The first is a *characteristic of adults*, the latter a *purpose for learning*. This should not be interpreted to say that the AE goals are wrong, but rather that the core learning principle of independent self-concept must be considered separately from the goals and purposes of AE. It is the latter that has falsely made HRD look inconsistent with adult learning principles. Human resource development practice is generally in harmony with the andragogical notion of independent "self-concept," but clearly does not share the goals and purposes of AE.

Because HRD focuses on performance outcomes, the significance of learner control is viewed as secondary by most professionals in HRD. The AE reaction to the performance focus rests with the concern that the feelings and worth of human beings as individuals are ignored by too much emphasis on bottom-line results. And, there is evidence that learning, or enhancing the capacity to learn, is a valuable outcome in and of itself and that sponsoring organizations logically benefit (Robinson and Stern, 1997). Thus, the line is sometimes falsely drawn between those who view HRD as tied to business goals and focused on the bottom line and those who would like to take a more humanistic stance in the matter. In fact, HRD shares concerns for a humanistic workplace, has *adult learning* as one of its core components, but also embraces organizational performance theory. The gap is not as wide as some would portray it to be.

THE PHASES OF THE ADULT LEARNING PLANNING PROCESS

Adult learning is defined as *the process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise*. Additionally, the ideas that (1) learners universally want to have control over their learning process and (2) learning increases as a result comes from AE. Adult learning theory takes a more situational stance on shared control.

Just what are the issues surrounding this core idea of learners controlling their own learning process? A contradiction exists between the AE ideal of individuals taking control of their learning and the reality of adult limitations in taking control of their own decision making. The following sections discuss the practical issues facing HRD as it relates to adults directing their own learning at the needs, creation, implementation, and evaluation planning phases.

Figure 8-2 provides the framework for this discussion. It shows the four phases of the adult learning planning process and an outer ring of theory. The four phases are:

- *Need*. Determine what learning is needed so as to achieve goals.
- *Create*. Create a strategy and resources to achieve the learning goal(s).
- *Implement*. Implement the learning strategy and use the learning resources.

- *Evaluate*. Assess the attainment of the learning goal and the process of reaching it.

These four phases serve as the categories or lenses used to search for what is known about learners controlling their own learning process.

Adults Determine Their Own Learning Needs

"Who needs what, as defined by whom?" is a wonderful way to sum up the issues of needs assessment in relation to the issue of

Adult Learners Controlling Their Learning Planning Process

Theoretical
Foundation of Adult Learning

"Multidisciplinary basis of adult learning including psychology, systems, and economic theories--considering the locus of control in the individual "

Adult
Learning

The process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise based on their personal goals.

Process Phase I
NEED
Process Phase II
CREATE
Process Phase III
IMPLEMENT
Process Phase IV
EVALUATE

"Determining what the individual needs to learn so as to achieve their goals."
"Creating a strategy and the resources to achieve the learning goal."
"Implementing the learning strategy and utilizing the learning resources."
"Assessing the attainment of the learning goal and the process of reaching it."

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Figure 8-2. *Adult learners controlling their own learning process.*

control. At the *need* phase, adults who exhibit control will fully determine the learning needs required to achieve their personal goal(s). The idea of control at the need determination phase can better be examined through the perspective of four types of learning:

Type of Learning	Locus of Control
Unintended learning	No control
Self-directed learning	Learner controlled
Mediated learning	Shared control between learner and external authority
Authority-directed learning	Authority controlled (organization or individual)

Even though there are limitations to learner control, Pentland (1997) found that the top four reasons why adults chose to learn on their own were all related to wanting to retain control of the learning process. In this vein, the determination of learning *needs*, the upfront commitment to learning, is the phase with the greatest amount of attention in the literature.

The determination of the learning needs perspective in the AE literature is primarily reactive in nature rather than strategic or even tactical. Learning professionals are portrayed as reacting to the needs expressed by adult learners. The control resides with the learner, and the learning professional responds to those felt needs. This assumes that the learner (1) is fully aware of his or her needs, (2) can accurately assess the specific learning required, (3) is motivated enough to engage in any learning required, and (4) is motivated enough to engage in any learning needed, even if threatening. Brookfield (1986) reacts to this notion:

To take learners' definitions of need as always determining appropriate practice is to cast the facilitator as a technician within the consumer mode. It is to remove from the facilitator all professional judgment and to turn him or her into a "knee-jerk" satisfier of consumer needs. Education becomes one giant department store in which facilitators are providers of whatever learners (consumers) believe will make them happy. (p. 97)

The extension of this idea into HRD is to conduct a learning/training *wants* analysis among employees and to call it a training *needs*

analysis. Employees are surveyed as to what training they would like to have and then the training options gaining the most votes are used as a basis for the course offerings. Recent developments in conducting these low-level surveys through computers and electronic datagathering systems have provided an air of sophistication to this incomplete and/or incompetent practice. Surveys of this nature can be one important element in a sound needs analysis process, but not the process itself.

The fundamental flaw with this approach is that there is no substantial attention given to individuals, work process, or the organization. It does nothing well. This popular vote strategy requires almost no professional expertise on the part of those running the process and allows them to hide behind the cloak of democracy. On the positive side, the fundamental strength of this approach is that is provides the opportunity to participate, even if at a minimum level. Given such opportunity, objections are minimized and motivation is increased even when unpopular alternatives are put forward.

The reality is that this approach is not effective for improving performance

(Swanson, 1996). Employee *wants* are only sometimes
related to real performance improvement *needs*. Frequently, this is
not due to employee ignorance, but simply the fact that they do not
have the expertise, information, or time to properly analyze their
needs. Their wants are their best guess, but are not accurate.
Performance improvement often requires joint planning and, occasionally,
an external analyst. Although this may create some tension
initially as control is shifted to the organization, adults frequently
become quite comfortable with it when they realize that giving up
some control will ultimately enable them to do their jobs better and
thus gain another form of control.

Adults Create and Implement Their Own Learning

The second phase of the adult learning planning process is *creating*
a strategy and the resources to achieve the learning goal. The
third phase is *implementing* the learning strategy and using the learning
resources.

Rosenblum and Darkenwald (1983) concluded from their experimental
research that high motivation could lead to high satisfaction
and achievement *without* participant planning involvement. If this

was the case, one interpretation could be that involvement at the
need phase is critical for the purpose of motivation and that similar
learner involvement in the other phases is not as important. This
could also be the reason why there is so little planning literature
related to the *create* and *implement* phases other than in-process
instructional techniques for engaging the learner. Without the issue
of control, it is easy to see that these techniques at the *create* and
implement phases use the core assumptions of andragogy while
avoiding the fundamental question of control.

The relevant AE literature focused on learner control of the creation
and implementation planning phase is scant. Most inferences
must be made from related studies and from the *mediated learning*—
the shared control between the learner and an external authority
(usually the instructor).

For example, the effect of adult learners' self-concepts and their
opinions about the content at the time they are directly engaged in
the learning process has been studied. The classic Spelman and Levy
(1966) study related to adults' self-concept of powerlessness and the
distorting impact it had on their learning. In this study, heavy smokers
learned as much general medical knowledge as nonsmokers, but
learned significantly less about the relation to lung cancer than the
nonsmokers. Smokers, feeling relatively powerless in context of their
smoking addiction and its consequences, ended up learning less
about lung cancer. The "liberating knowledge" was ineffectual.

In a more hopeful vein, part of Tolman's (1959) theory of purposive
behaviorism explains *expectancies* in context of experience.
Tolman suggests that adults learn where the goal is and how to get
to it. Thus, it is reasonable to think that there is a melding of purposes
between the organization and the individual contributor and
that the means (creation and implementation) of achieving those
purposes becomes relatively easy.

It could be that self-directed learning decisions at the *create* and *implement* phases result in high motivation, minimum growth, and high satisfaction. Thus, a countertheory to self-directed learning is that pursuing the opinions of adults to create and implement learning leads to low-risk decisions—comfort rather than growth. The control dilemma concerns HRD professionals as they struggle to meet organizational goals, determine the content and method of programs, and seek to fully engage learners.

Brookfield (1988) sheds light on this dilemma: "For a facilitator to completely ignore learners' needs and expressions of preference is arrogant and unrealistic. But it is just as misguided for a facilitator to completely repress his or her own ideas concerning worthwhile curricula or effective methods and to allow learners complete control over these" (p. 97). When it comes to the *create* and *implement* phases of planning learning theory and practice, the shared control between the external authority or instructor and the learner is the primary focus rather than learner self-direction. Within this model, professional educators engage learners and potential learners in the *create* phase so as to establish motivation and community and to promote validity of the experience and materials. At the *implementation* phase, shared control can take a variety of forms, including formative evaluation, team learning, and peer instruction.

Adults Evaluate Their Own Learning

The fourth phase of the adult learning planning process is *evaluation*, which is defined as "a systematic collection of evidence to determine if desired changes are taking place" (Swanson, 1996, p. 26). Before discussing adult learners controlling the *evaluation* of their own learning, it is critical to separate learning that they have controlled up to this phase from learning that has been controlled by others up to this point.

Assuming the learner has retained and executed control to this stage, the learner should be asking the evaluation question, "What systematic collection of evidence needs to be carried out to determine whether my desired changes took place?" The follow-up question is, "Based on the evidence collected, to what degree did the desired changes take place?" The questions are focused on learning outcomes or summative evaluation, not the process of working toward the learning outcomes or formative evaluation.

The learning evaluation literature is careful about noting direct measures of outcomes versus proxy, or related, measures. For example, a direct measure of a desired knowledge and/or expertise learning outcome would require instruments to directly measure the change. An indirect measure of knowledge might be to ask oneself or participants if they thought they learned a lot or whether they were satisfied with their learning. Indirect measures have highly questionable

validity. Research has shown that participant self-ratings of learning are not related to actual learning (Alliger and Janak, 1989; Alliger et al., 1997; Dixon, 1991). Although self-ratings are generally reliable (consistent), they are generally not trusted as being accurate (valid).

Furthermore, participant ratings can be easily inflated by influential techniques by the instructor (Swanson and Fentress, 1976).

Thus, if adult learners rely on proxy measures—*self-assessment* of anticipated outcomes—they will most likely make false conclusions based on invalid data. Worse yet, if the learning professional, serving as a resource to the adult learning process, relies on leaner perceptions and feelings about desired changes having taken place (even more indirect measures), the problem is compounded. Examples of such highly questionable evaluation practices relying on secondary sources of perception data are reported in the literature (see Cervero and Wilson, 1994, pp. 60–61, 86-87, 111–113).

The adult learner, wanting to retain control over the evaluation process while gaining valid data, will, in most instances, have to reach outside his or her internal reference to gain rational evaluation data. Obtaining direct measures of learning—knowledge and expertise—from formal tests or expert judges would be the most likely alternative. In many avocational realms of personal development, interest groups provide external measures of skill through competitive judging (for example, car shows, stamp shows, dance competition, etc.).

At a less threatening level, experts serving as mentors can provide similar evaluation.

The humanistic side of the evaluation literature has had a resistance to summative, outcome evaluation. The formative evaluation view is that evaluation should be diagnostic and have the purpose of improving learning, rather than simply determining if the desired changes took place. Formative evaluation is seen as feedback and feed-forward between the various phases of learning. Again, the purpose of formative evaluation is to be a part of the learning process, not to assess the drive toward organization performance and the demands for adult competence in the workplace. Furthermore, it is controlled by the organization, not the individual. Human resource development functions in an organizational world and demands results and the assessing of results. Management or work teams will likely be full partners in the *evaluation* phase of learning outcomes rather than the individual learners.

In summary, adult learning theory provides sound advice to HRD at each phase of the planning process:

Phase	Sound Practice
Need	Engage learners in this phase to gain higher motivation. Do not expect self-reported needs to be accurate for either the individual or the organization.
Create	Engage learners in this phase to gain higher validity in the selected learning strategies.
Implement	Engage learners in this phase to better mediate the actual learning.
Evaluate	Engage learners in this phase to gain higher self-reflection and integration of the knowledge and expertise being sought.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the gaps between research and practice is a primary role

for the reflective practitioner in HRD (Swanson and Holton, 1997). The call to action is to implement best known practices *and* to conduct more research related to the methods to assess valid learning needs, create and implement valid strategies for achieving learning goals, and conduct valid assessment of learning. This effort should be directed at organization needs as well as those of individual performers.

The idea that the goal of HRD is or should be performance improvement is by no means universally accepted by practitioners or researchers in the field. Some hold that fostering learning or the capacity to learn is a valuable outcome in and of itself and assume that sponsoring organizations will logically benefit. Thus, the line is sometimes drawn between those who view HRD as tied to business goals and focused on performance and those who would like to take a more humanistic stance in the matter. This dichotomy can be termed the *performance-versus-learning debate* as a matter of convenience (see Swanson, 1995; Watkins and Marsick, 1995).

This debate, like many others, is fueled by an often misconstrued delineation of the opposing sides. Upon closer examination, the two sides may have more in common than first proposed. On the one

hand, those who adhere to the performance orientation of HRD do not do so in an attempt to deny the dignity and worth of employees. Neither do they deny that learning is a necessary component of performance. The goal of performance-focused HRD is simply to ensure that the HRD process within organizations contributes to the goals of the organizational system within which it operates. This does not necessarily imply an authoritarian management style. Some might argue that to *ignore* performance issues is itself inhumane and inconsiderate of the workforce. Although organizational performance does not guarantee job security, poor organizational performance puts jobs at serious risk. On the other hand, those on the learning side of the debate are not so naive as to think that organizational goals and performance are irrelevant to HRD. Quite to the contrary, they *are* seen as core, but that learning is not always directly tied to the bottom line of an organization.

From the HRD perspective, adult learning, when practiced within productive organizations, should strive to contribute directly to the advancement of the host organization’s goals. The host organization is a purposeful system that must pursue effective and efficient survival goals. Consequently, it is the responsibility of HRD to focus on organizational goals as well as individual goals.