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Involving Athletes: Implementing a Human Resource Development Approach among the NCAA and Member Institutions

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Involving Athletes: Implementing a Human Resource Development Approach among the NCAA and Member Institutions

By Angela D. Carter, Clemson University; Sarah Stokowski, Clemson University; Chris Corr, Troy University; Skye G. Arthur-Banning, Clemson University; and Michael Godfrey, Clemson University

ABSTRACT

As opposition to the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) collegiate model of athletics continue to mount, the next president of the NCAA must adapt to the changing marketplace and social perception of the organization in order to maintain relevancy within the field of collegiate athletics. This article

Impermissible Communication and Recruiting Tactics of Former Boise State Men's Assistant Tennis Coach Backfires

By Dr. Michael A. Ross, Ph.D.

As determined and released by the Division I Committee on Infractions, former Boise State assistant men's tennis coach and former head men's tennis coach committed NCAA violations when said former assistant coach was found to have engaged in multiple and various forms of impermissible recruiting activities. As a result of the aforementioned recruiting violations conducted by the former assistant coach, it was also determined that the former head coach was in violation of the head coach responsibility legislation by failing to demonstrate that he monitored his assistant coach in an effective manner.

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proposes the use of human resource development (HRD) to provide a range of capacity building and change leadership interventions to bolster talent skill sets and competencies within the NCAA. The aim of this conceptual article is to introduce HRD interventions to the field of intercollegiate athletic leadership and to highlight how HRD practice might ultimately inform imminent changes to the governance of the NCAA organization. Given the lack of representation col-

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In agreement, Boise State, the former assistant coach, and the enforcement staff concur that violations occurred when the former assistant coach communicated with and recruited student-athletes who were not registered in the NCAA Transfer portal. The violations discovered to be conducted by the former assistant coach were found in the form of requesting student-athletes enrolled in other NCAA Division I schools to assist him in recruiting prospective student-athletes to Boise State, personally recruiting student-athletes to Boise State who were not

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legiate athletes currently have within the traditional NCAA operating structure, HRD provides the NCAA a pathway to involve its various stakeholders (e.g., athletes, administrators, coaches) in decision making processes.

Keywords: Human resource development, NCAA, organizational change

The NCAA is currently experiencing a change in leadership as former state of Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker assumes the office of NCAA President in 2023 (NCAA, 2022). Historically, those in the highest position of authority within the NCAA (e.g., president, executive director) have perpetuated the practices, actions, and ideologies of leaders before them. Now former NCAA president Mark Emmert's commitment to his predecessor's, Myles Brand, "collegiate model of athletics" embodies such perpetuation (Splitt, 2010; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). Such actions, or rather inaction, have resulted in the development and continued cultivation of the systematic structure of collegiate athletics and the creation of a dominant logic pervasive to the NCAA and its member institutions (e.g., see Corr et al., 2020; Nite et al., 2019; and Southall & Staurowsky, 2013 for a complete review). This institutional logic posits amateurism, and the maintenance thereof, as fundamental to the collegiate athlete experience. Amateurism is defined by the NCAA as the participation in collegiate athletics as a component of an athlete's educational experience and differentiated from professional sport (NCAA, 2022, p. xiii). Accordingly, the collegiate model of athletics, formulated in 2004 by then NCAA president Myles Brand, serves to perpetuate the maintenance of amateurism within the operation of collegiate athletics (Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). Such portrayal of collegiate athletics as

an avocational (i.e., amateur) activity meant to complement the overall student experience gives credence to justifications positioning collegiate athletes as more closely aligned to students rather than employees. Such alignment is fundamental to the NCAA's stated – and defended – position that athletes are, fundamentally, not employees because they are students.

HRD provides the NCAA a pathway to involve its various stakeholders (e.g., athletes, administrators, coaches) in decision making processes.

The appointment of new leadership provides organizations the opportunity to reestablish and reformulate their position within a given institutional setting (Farrell, 2018; Sims, 2000). Accordingly, in appointing a new NCAA president, the NCAA has the opportunity to create and develop meaningful organizational change – specifically concerning the involvement of athletes within meaningful decision making processes. The actions of the next NCAA president will either maintain or disrupt the current trajectory and operation of collegiate athletics in the United States. Given the influence of human resource development (HRD) in stimulating organizational shifts, the present manuscript sought to illustrate the value of forthcoming NCAA leadership implementing such an HRD approach.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

HRD is most closely defined as "a combination of structured and unstructured

learning and performance based activities which develop individual and organizational competency, capability and capacity to cope with and successfully manage change" (Simonds & Pederson, 2006, p. 123). Increasingly, HRD is considered to occupy a major role in facilitating large-scale organizational change and the achievement of financial goals (Garavan & McGuire, 2010). Extant literature has established primary emphases on areas of HRD specifically pertinent to development (e.g., career, training, organizational) (Chalofsky, 1992; McLagan, 1989; Swanson, 2001). Accordingly, HRD is distinctly tied to development and fostering organizational expertise to provide opportunities for employees to acquire necessary skills to meet current and future job demands (Werner, 2014).

HRD contributes to a variety of organizational outcomes. The formation of an ethical culture and climate (Ardichvili & Jondle, 2009; Foote & Ruona, 2008), innovation, (Chen & Huang, 2009; O'Donnell et al., 2007; Werbel & Balkin, 2010), knowledge sharing (Park & Kim, 2015), organizational change (Garavan, 2007; Peterson, 2008), organizational learning (Heraty & Morley, 2008), and non-toxic or dysfunctional organizational culture (Kulik & Roberson, 2008) have all been attributed to HRD. Such HRD interventions are a part of the strategically oriented organizational processes designed to manage the development of human resources to contribute to the organization's overall success (Werner, 2014) (see Table 1). Practically, these interventions can be used to arrive at desired outcomes and improve employees' capability and performance through existing HRD practices and through management and organizational development components (Yuvaraj & Mulugeta, 2013).

Human Resource Development Outcomes, Interventions, and Empirical Studies

Outcomes Associated with HRD Practice		Corresponding HRD Interventions	HRD scholarship on Outcomes and Interventions
Organizational	Ethical culture and climate	Corporate social responsibility; socially conscious management practices; sustainability	Ardichvili & Jondle, 2009; Bierema & D'Abundo; Desimone, et al., 2002; Foote & Ruona, 2008; Loe, et. al, 2000
	Innovation	Capacity development and action learning/action science tools	Chen & Huang, 2009; O'Donnell et al., 2007; Yeo & Gold, 2011; Werbel & Balkin, 2010
	Knowledge sharing	Knowledge management systems; social network mapping	Eby & Dobbins, 1997; Park & Kim, 2015; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995
	Organizational change competence	Leadership development; social capital; change readiness; manage transition through change	Ashford, 1988; Garavan, 2007; Gaertner & Ramnarayan 1983; Jimmieson et al., 2004; Peterson, 2008; Warrick; 2017; Wright, 2008
	Organization effectiveness	Leadership development; employee involvement, morale, motivation, personality development, employee communication	Chen, 2008; Colbert et al., 2014; Riordan et al., 2005
	Organizational governance and agency mediation	Culture, climate; Ensure that organizational cultures, climate, and practices do not become toxic or dysfunctional	Gold et al., 2001; Kulik, 2005; Kulik et al., 2008; Schein, 2010; Gold et al., 2001; Rahman et al., 2013
	Organizational learning	Developing a learning organization	Heraty & Morley, 2008; Senge, et al., 2017; Marsick & Watkins, 1993
Individual	Communication competence	Executive and management coaching and mentoring	Deans et al., 2006; Wiemann, 1977; Ellinger & Kim, 2014; Grover, 2016; Grant, 2014; Deans, Oakley, James, & Wrigley, 2006
	Knowledge, skills, and abilities development	Formal and informal job training programs	Evans & Davis, 2005; Montesino, 2002; Santos & Stuart, 2003
	Intercultural competence	Intercultural development inventory; diversity intelligence; emotional intelligence	Hammer et al., (2012); Hughes, 2018; Whittmer & Hopkins, 2018
	Leader development	Leader development programs that focus on vertical leader development and leader identity development	Garavan, 2007; Petrie, 2011; Sims & Carter, 2019
	Team & self-competence	Morale, motivation, and working relationship improvement through the development of groups and teams	Eby & Dobbins, 1997; Stone, 2010; Tabassi et al., 2012

NCAA HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The NCAA is a governing body that consists of various chief executive officers, and its board of directors is responsible for ensuring that all divisions operate according to the organization's basic principles and regulations. Although the NCAA is a member organization, approximately 500 employees who work to facilitate the operations of the various committees and

groups within the organization populate its headquarters. While the NCAA's states they exist primarily to protect collegiate athletes (NCAA, n.d.), the organization has distanced itself from the governance of athletes specifically (Hall, 2022). Accordingly, the NCAA maintains they govern the members institutions that comprise the NCAA. Such position serves to justify the lack of representation that athletes have in NCAA legislative proceedings.

However, changes to NCAA governance are being prompted by internal and external factors affecting the organization. A primary internal factor motivating organizational change is the increasing number of college athletes who are pushing for more involvement in their college experience and decision-making (Navarro et al., 2020). In addition, the NCAA has also faced various legal challenges that have required organizational alterations

pertaining to governance and bylaws specifically targeting college athletes (e.g., NCAA v. Alston [2021], O'Bannon v. NCAA [2015]). While accepting that its various operations are complex, the NCAA has yet to adapt to the changes brought about by internal (e.g., athlete activism, conference realignment) and external pressures (e.g., legal decisions, social perception). As HRD practices can improve employee competence and knowledge, develop an organization's leadership capacity, and enhance business continuity (e.g., Chalofsky, 1992; McLagan, 1989; Swanson, 2001), the NCAA would benefit from the implementation of HRD practices.

EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

The success of an organization is contingent upon its employees. HRD situates employees as the most valuable asset an organization can have (Jacobs & Jones, 1990; Kurian, 2018; Muduli, 2015). In times of organizational change, many companies try to retain their high performing employees while seeking to minimize their expenses. This is often accomplished by reducing the overall number of employees and, accordingly, expecting greater resilience from retained employees (Naudé, 2012). Emblematic of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees that were retained amid widespread layoffs and organizational shifts experienced trauma and dealt with complexity while adapting to the new nature of their workplace reality (Dirani et al., 2021). As the NCAA experiences shifting leadership, formulating an employee training and development program built on learning principles would serve to benefit the capability of members. Such training and development are important functions of HRD organizations can implement when undergoing change. While employee training is focused on capability improvement for current specific purposes, development is focused on improving

knowledge for the benefit of future job functions (Mulang, 2015). Organizations that have a positive and open relationship with employees as it pertains to training will have employees who hold the organization in high regard, maintain high-performance work practices, high organizational citizenship behavior, and remain with the organization (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Nilsson & Ellström, 2012). Developing and training individuals can offer an organization the ability to adapt to change, which in turn enables an organization to maintain its competitive advantage. Such concepts would be beneficial for the NCAA as they attempt to implement a new leadership structure.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING CAPACITY

Learning is integral to HRD (Ruona, 2000). Organizations that create a climate for constant learning that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and ideas among employees promote the generation of new knowledge and innovation (Lau & Ngo, 2004). While traditional leadership development relies on horizontal development, or competencies, recent trends indicate vertical development, or development stages, as of significant value to organizations. While horizontal development can be transmitted from an expert, vertical development must be earned (Petrie, 2011). The traditional focus on individual leadership has shifted to connected collective leadership intra-organization (Swensen et al., 2016). The use of relevant examples from participants' experiences, modeling leadership roles, and facilitating interaction with other leaders permit participants to assess leadership identities, internalize, and expand the repertoire of leader identities they are willing to consider (Sims & Carter, 2019). In addition, coaching and mentoring – people-centered and 'holistic' approaches to capacity building – are featured prominently in HRD. While coaching tends to be viewed as

task-oriented, skills-focused, directed, and time-bound, mentoring is focused on open-ended personal development (Deans et al., 2006). Ultimately, we suggest the NCAA takes a developmental approach to building leaders that incorporates and integrates vertical leader development, mentoring, and coaching.

Organizational learning mechanisms are systems that allow individuals to collect, store, and distribute information that is relevant to their performance. These procedures are institutionalized and can help an organization develop and implement learning methods. Accordingly, learning can become organizational if it is enabled by the various capabilities of an organization (Lipshitz & Popper, 1998). Subsequently, organizations can effectively be “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

A learning organization is characterized by continuous learning in order to create the continuous transformation of an organization and its culture (Sidani & Reece, 2018). Therefore, in order to survive in an increasingly unpredictable world, organizations must develop the capability to learn, adapt, and remain adaptable. Constructs for the dimensions of the learning organization include:

1. Creating continuous learning opportunities,
2. Promoting inquiry and dialogue,
3. Encouraging collaboration and team learning,
4. Creating systems to capture and share learning,
5. Empowering people toward a collective vision,
6. Connecting the organization to its environment,
7. Providing strategic leadership for learning. (Marsick & Watkins, 2003)

The learning organization results in a strategic relationship with employee training and development, recognizing the fact that knowledge is the answer to environmental challenges (Vemic, 2007). Consequently, we suggest that in order to thrive in the future, the NCAA must continuously improve and expand its learning capabilities and ultimately should strive to become a learning organization and employ this system-focused learning emphasis.

ENSURE BUSINESS CONTINUITY, COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Leadership, change management, and organization development play a central role in achieving organizational effectiveness. A healthy organization has a variety of characteristics such as low turnover, minimal political interference, high morale, and minimal confusion (Lencioni, 2012). Each has a financial benefit to the organization and is part of the business case for business continuity and organization effectiveness.

Systemic organizational change interventions, or organization development, allow organizations the opportunity to “structure themselves, communicate with other organizations, restructure and adopt, and continuously learn to cope with a continuous changing environment” (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008, p. 452). Today’s business environment requires that HRD not only support the business strategies of organizations, but that it assumes a pivotal role in the shaping of business strategy. Business success hinges on the NCAA organization’s ability to use employee expertise as a factor in the shaping of business strategy and governance changes (Torraco & Swanson, 1995). A strategy is a process that an organization uses to set and achieve its goals, and HRD can be a critical component of a strategy to develop and sustain key resources (e.g., people). This process involves setting the

organization’s basic mission and goals, and the use of its resources to achieve these goals. Setting strategy is usually carried out using analytical and decision-making techniques (Torraco & Swanson, 1995). Change processes also require the use of a model or framework (e.g., see Burnes, 2004; Hiatt, 2006; Hussain et al., 2018; and Martins & Coetzee, 2009 for a complete review). Since there is a strong link between HRD and organizational and employee performance, NCAA stakeholders should strive to employ HRD strategies (e.g., career development, training and development, and organizational development) that will enable them to “improve employee performance and enhance the capability of the employees to achieve desired goals and objectives of the organization” (Kareem & Hussein, 2019, pp. 317-318).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

HRD practices, including the functions of training and development, organizational development, and career development (Wang & McLean, 2007) are critical strategic tools that organizations use to improve individual, team, and organizational performance (Armstrong & Foley, 2003). Constructive HRD practices help organizations develop and sustain a robust knowledge base and culture. They can also improve an organization’s performance by helping it retain and develop its existing talent. These techniques help build a culture that is learning-friendly (Chen et al., 2020). Not only should an organization have training programs and pursue quality employees, but organizations also need to develop and sustain intellectual capital. This can be done through knowledge management techniques such as documenting and appropriating knowledge (Bassi, 1997). These methods can help an organization develop a knowledge-based system that will allow it to take advantage of its long-term competitive advantage. Meanwhile, we suggest that the NCAA regard intellectual capital as an investment

capable of yielding long-term competitive advantage. Such competitive advantage through the implementation of HRD practices would directly involve college athletes within the decision-making processes and communicate the value they hold to the operation of the overall enterprise of collegiate athletics.

The NCAA has established a line of demarcation between collegiate athletes and the organization. While the NCAA is a member-led organization comprised of the more than one-thousand-member colleges and universities (NCAA, n.d.), the NCAA has distanced itself from stating they govern collegiate athletes. Rather, the NCAA creates rules and regulations to be implemented by member institutions tasked with the oversight of collegiate athletes themselves. While the NCAA has maintained this position in legal proceedings (e.g., *NCAA v. Alston* [2021]), such organizational structure serves as a direct limit to collegiate athletes’ ability to be adequately represented (Southall & Weiler, 2014). Accordingly, the implementation of HRD strategies to foster a collaborative environment between the NCAA, members institutions, and collegiate athletes may serve to alleviate much of the scrutiny cast upon the NCAA in recent years. Rather than seeking immunity (e.g., antitrust exemption), we posit that the NCAA’s utilization of HRD strategies to directly involve a representation of collegiate athletes within decision making processes and functions would be beneficial to the continued operation of college athletics within the current period of organizational change. In addition, such collaborative efforts may also serve to quell growing calls for unionization and deregulation within the college sport marketplace.

The objective of this article was to examine the linkages between HRD, sport leadership, and governance of the NCAA. With an emphasis on developing areas of commonality between HRD,

NCAA leadership, and collegiate athletes, impending NCAA organizational and governance changes would be more adequately informed and tangible. For the NCAA, organizational change is as necessary as it is complex, and it is evident that adapting strategies and methods are the only way to survive organization change (Augier & Teece, 2007). By developing individual and organizational capacity and utilizing HRD interventions, the NCAA will be more equipped to embrace impending organizational changes. Such implementation and valuation of HRD would require the NCAA to assume a position that situates college athletes as organizational units integral to the operation of the enterprise. While falling short of classification as employees, *such positioning would accomplish the duality of benefitting the NCAA in maintaining its position and improving the experience of college athletes.*

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registered or listed in the Transfer Portal, and also recruiting and involving current Boise State student-athletes in the recruitment of prospective student-athletes. Elaborating on the reported violations,

it was discovered that over the span of two academic years, the former assistant coach impermissibly communicated with a reported three student-athletes who were enrolled at other institutions. The

nature of the relationship and intent of this communication was to gain the three student-athletes' assistance in recruiting four prospective student-athletes to commit to Boise State. Communications