

## **Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Ethics and International Human Resource Development**

Since the middle of the 20th century concern about ethics in organisations, corporate responsibility (CSR) and environmental sustainability have been articulated by political, business, academic and other ‘thought leaders’. However, in spite of regular and high profile global conferences and increasingly strident rhetoric in the professional and popular press, progress in these areas has been patchy. In a context of economic challenges and political vicissitudes the engine of change, it seems, has ‘stalled’. Scholars and practitioners within the HRD field are well aware of the persistent and seemingly intractable consequences in relation to these issues associated with unitarist short-term market-facing organizational agendas fostered by a preoccupation with performance and profitability (Bierema and D’Abundo 2004; Garavan and McGuire 2010; Turnbull and Elliott 2005; Vince 2005). In addressing these issues HRD scholars have traditionally made use of either functional, managerialist and instrumental approaches to learning and organizational development or have promoted humanist agendas which focus attention on the importance of individual development and transformation (McGuire, Cross and McDonnell 2005). A key theme of this special issue is that both are necessary but neither is sufficient of itself (Garavan and McGuire 2010; Turnbull and Elliott 2005).

In the interconnected, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous context in which organizations operate (Bennett and Lemoine 2014) HRD is well placed to motivate and support organizations, institutions and individuals to excel socially, sustainably and morally. The theoretical diversity of perspectives the HRD field can bring to bear on these issues is well-represented in this special issue. The articles that comprise the issue provide the basis for a re-imagining of the HRD role as ‘architect’ (Ulrich 2014, p. 1) able to design and foster

innovative approaches to value-creation and long-term values-driven engagement with all of the organization's stakeholders. Kim and McLean focus attention on the HRD-society nexus and highlight the complex pluralistic and interdependent interactions between internal and external stakeholders of an organization. They develop a model of a Stakeholder-Based HRD (SBHRD) with important epistemological implications for the discipline to enhance the value of corporate social and ethical responsibilities and enlarge the scope and beneficiaries of HRD activities. Two of the articles in this issue provoke a re-consideration of talent management. Swailes, Downs and Orr challenge conventional normative approaches to talent management. Drawing on traditions of positive psychology as well as a capability approach they propose an inclusive conceptualisation of talent management and a four-part typology of talent management strategies. The challenge to traditional approaches to talent management is also taken up in the work of Devins and Gold who highlight the potential for a sustainable talent management and development model that includes low skilled and low paid sectors of the labour market as a crucial link to enhance an organisation's performance and responsibility to society. Both papers highlight the collective endeavour of work practices and an enhanced role for stakeholders to support sustainable development. A further article is grounded in a rich assessment of leadership development practice. Blakeley and Higgs focus attention on issues connected with responsible leadership and address the 'knowing-doing gap' that continues to limit the transfer to the workplace of responsible leadership development programme outcomes. Making use of Bourdieusian concepts of language and power their paper reveals some of the mechanisms that can inspire socially responsible leadership values but also demonstrates contextual barriers that may inhibit their manifestation in the workplace. Continuing the practice-based theme Russ-Eft focuses her attention at the intersection of evaluation and sustainability, developing a theoretical model connecting HRD with programme evaluation and sustainability.

The articles in this special issue of *Human Resource Development International* view corporate social responsibility, sustainability and ethics from a systemic and international perspective. They indicate that the HRD field has the potential to offer a core set of values and principles to support researchers and their practitioner colleagues as co-architects in the design of activities, interventions and practices that are responsible, sustainable and ethical. This requires the courage to challenge existing assumptions about the scope and purpose of HRD and to imagine new approaches to HRD practice. If those engaged with HRD are able to rise to this challenge they are well placed to facilitate changing things from how they are to how they ought to be (Sadler-Smith, 2014; Simon, 1996) and thereby enable individuals and organizations to flourish in more equitable, responsible and sustainable ways.

Valerie Anderson, University of Portsmouth

Thomas Garavan, Edinburgh Napier University

Eugene Sadler-Smith, University of Surrey

## References

- Bennett, N. and G.J. Lemoine. 2014. "What VUCA really means for you." *Harvard Business Review* January-February: 27.
- Bierema, L. and M. D'Abundo. 2004. "HRD with a conscience: Practicing socially responsible HRD." *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 23: 443-458.
- Garavan, T. N. and D. McGuire. 2010. "Human resource development and society: Human resource development's role in embedding corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and ethics in organizations." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 12 (5): 487-507.

McGuire, D., C. Cross, and D. O'Donnell. 2005. "Why humanistic approaches in HRD won't work". *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 16 (1): 131-137.

Sadler-Smith, E. 2014. "HRD research and design science: recasting interventions as artefacts". *Human Resource Development International* 17 (2): 129-144.

Simon, H.A. 1969/1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Turnbull, S. and C. Elliott. 2005. "Pedagogies of HRD: The social-political implications" in *Critical thinking in human resources development*. Edited by S. Turnbull and C. Elliott, 189-201. London: Routledge.

Ulrich, D. 2014. "The future targets or outcomes of HR work: Individuals, organizations, and leadership." *Human Resource Development International* 17 (1): 1-9.

Vince, R. 2005. "Ideas for critical practitioners" in *Critical thinking in human resource development*, edited by C. Elliott and S. Turnbull, 26-36. London: Routledge.