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Understanding the HRD Role in MNCs: The Imperatives of Social Capital and Networking

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In an era of increasing global competition, it is argued that knowledge and skills are the key sources of competitive advantage. This places the human resource development (HRD) function in a situation of increased status and power, if HRD professionals adopt roles in a way that adds "value" and facilitates achievement of competitive advantage. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are ensconced in this dynamic, increasingly competitive and global environment, even more so than domestic organizations. This provides opportunities for HRD professionals to demonstrate their ability to "deliver value" by reconceptualizing their role as "strategic" or business partners. To engage in such roles, it is evident that social capital is of increasing importance to HRD professionals, and hence the imperativeness of developing social networking competency. This article analyzes the implications of the MNC context for the roles of HRD professionals. It discusses how this context influences and changes their roles and how those roles are organized. Drawing from this discussion, it explores the emergence and increasing importance of social networking competency for HRD professional's efforts at successfully engaged in new roles.

Keywords: *HRD professional role; MNC; social networking; social capital; business partner; centers of expertise; corporate HRD; centers of excellence*

Organizations today operate in an external environment that is fast paced, uncertain, and continuously changing. These changes include global competition,

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growth in mergers, acquisitions and alliances, organizational restructuring, and advances in technology and telecommunication (Dowling & Welch, 2004). Darling, Darling, and Elliot (1999, p. 12) identified particular changes of relevance to human resource development (HRD) professionals, such as increased concern with labor-market issues, including long-term unemployment, skills shortages, and equal opportunities, organizational restructuring, including decentralization and delayering and the consequential increase in the power-base of senior operational managers, developments in information technology, and investment in learning media and resources. The consequences of these changes vary with respect to each organization, but for those affected by this dynamic environment, there is a need for greater flexibility and new sources of competitive advantage. It is argued that knowledge, skills, and core competencies are considered to be the drivers of innovation and change and thus the key sources of competitive advantage (Gratton, 2000; Iles, 1996). Indeed, Boxall and Purcell (2003) highlight that these changes place a premium on knowledge work and workers. Concomitantly, this suggests that HRD becomes the lynchpin around which organizations succeed and maintain competitive advantage.

All types of organizations are ensconced in such an external environment, but specific organizational characteristics emphasize some important differences in the role profiles of those tasked with operating in each specific organization. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are considerably different from domestic organizations. Westney and Zaheer (2001) suggest that these differences are of both "in kind" and "in degree." MNCs possess both heterogeneity and multidimensionality. They operate in cross-border conditions resulting in external environments that are additionally complex, diverse, fragmented, and nonmonolithic (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). The internal contexts of MNCs are also different from their domestic counterparts. They are characterized by significant spatial, cultural, and organizational distance. They manifest differences in areas, such as language barriers, inconsistencies, and conflicts in values, practices, and culture and variations in human resource management (HRM) practices (Peterson & Thomas, 2007) and likewise HRD practices. MNCs possess high levels of organizational complexity and unique structures that are used to manage people. Their distinctive structures place significant demands on HR professionals who are required to develop a wide diversity of managers and other employees, as well as working within a complex set of coordinating mechanisms (Werner, 2000). Similar to the HR function, the complex internal and external context of the MNC, as compared with domestic organizations, results in important changes to aspects of the HRD function. In domestic organizations, HRD can be implemented in a relatively routine and systematic way; however, in the MNC context HRD often needs to be part of the strategic planning and implementation process. Many activities in MNCs cannot be implemented effectively without consideration of HRD issues (Ulrich, Younger, & Brockbank, 2008).

The competitive environmental circumstances and recognition of the value of knowledge and learning for organizational competitive advantage are argued to increase the status and power of the HRD function and provide significant opportunities for HRD professionals (Carter, Hirsh, & Aston, 2002). The challenging organizational context of MNCs creates distinctive roles for HR and HRD professionals not found in domestic organizations (see Peterson & Thomas, 2007). The combined challenges presented from the external environment and the internal MNC context are opportunities for HRD professionals to advance their credibility and power, but it is not simply the case that traditional approaches to HRD will be suitable. Two key challenges for the HRD professionals are evident. They need to think about how their role should be performed so as to deliver on a global scale and achieve significant organizational outcomes (Christensen, 2005). They need to develop new competencies as are necessitated in these new roles, of which social networking competency emerges as increasingly important.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the implications of the MNC context for the roles and role performance of HRD professionals and explore the emergence and increasing importance of social networking competency for the roles. The competitive environment, and specifically the MNC context, provides an opportunity for HRD professionals to demonstrate their ability to “deliver value” to managers and other stakeholders by reconceptualizing their role as “strategic” or business partners. Explicit in our discussion of the HRD role is the notion that the HRD professional is less an administrative manager and more an “internal consultant” working on ensuring that HRD makes a sustained contribution to MNC competitiveness and organizational change (Sheehan, Cooper, Holland, & De Cieri, 2007). Evident from the discussion is the increasing importance of social capital for HRD professionals who operate at these strategic and consultancy levels and hence the imperativeness of developing social networking competency.

This article is organized as follows as a means to present a number of propositions. First, we review the literature on the MNC context and its implications for HRD professionals. Second, we consider the evolving role of the HRD professional, approaches to organizing HRD roles in MNCs, and the challenges associated with performing these new role dimensions. Third, we illuminate how social capital and social networking competency become increasingly important in light of the preceding two sections. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications for HRD as an activity in MNCs and what it means for the development of HRD professionals.

The Global Context and HRD Strategy in MNCs

Globalization is highlighted as a key environmental factor shaping the work of HRD professionals in MNCs. Globalization encompasses a multiplicity of issues, including the growth in global, multinational and transnational

organisations developments in technology, mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances. Short and Callahan (2005) argue that as organizations look to go global or remain global, they are likely to look to HRD professionals for advice and support. However, globalization demands radical transformation of the way HRD thinks about the nature, role, and tools of developing people (Iles, 1996). Hart (1999) suggests that global organizations require new strategic models and leaders who can lead the transformation to sustainability. Consequently, HRD professionals, working in a global context, face a number of additional challenges (Gilley, Quatro, & Lynham, 2003), which those working in a more domestic context face to a lesser degree or not at all. Examples include working with cultural diversity and conflicts, different styles of leadership and decision making, geographically dispersed physical and human entities, global coordination and control requirements, and maintaining communication richness over distance (Marquardt, Berger, & Loan, 2004). Short and Callahan (2005) summarize the additional elements to the global HRD professional's role. These include understanding other cultures, increasing employees' cultural competence, preparing employees for periods of expatriation, developing managers who can think, lead, and act from a global perspective, with global skills and a global mindset (Kim, 1999), increasing employee competence in strategic communication knowledge (conflict avoidance, showing respect, correct language use), tactical communication skills (giving instructions, networking, writing, persuading, listening), and behavioral traits/cognitive abilities such as empathy, cognition, and complexity (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999), employing cross-functional teams and encouraging cross learning (Branscombe, Florida, Hart, Keller, & Boville, 1999). Barnett (1990) suggests that the "global firm is not constrained by national boundaries as it searches for ideas, talent, capital and other resources required for its success" (p. 7). Therefore, although routine personal workers will find their wages depressed, knowledge workers will gain finding a larger and larger market for their services (Ohmae, 1985). Globalization imperatives suggest that HRD professionals should focus more strongly on maintaining and developing the knowledge worker and managing knowledge. At the more strategic level, the global HRD professional is likely to be called on to design more responsive organizational structures (Monge & Fulk, 1999) and help in initiatives, which push decision-making authority to lower levels (Branscomb et al., 1999). Thus, we propose the following:

Proposition 1a: Globalization places new demands on the HRD profession that are not experienced by HRD professionals in a domestic organization.

MNCs, which are drivers of and outputs from globalization, are argued to be responsible for the dissemination of "best practice" managerial knowledge and techniques, internationally and worldwide (Martin & Beaumont, 1998). They thus facilitate convergence of HRD practices. A convergence thesis

argues that market conditions compel MNCs to adopt common strategies and practices, thus leading to greater economic, organizational, and employment homogeneity across borders (Quintanilla & Ferner, 2003). This notion of convergence is tempered by an opposing theoretical view advocating divergence. Particular influences relating to country and local context, including cultural issues, the regulatory environment, labor-market characteristics, and skill supply and level and industry structures inhibit convergence. The institutional approach suggests that the institutional complexity that MNCs face as a result of operating in numerous host countries acts as a counterweight to pressures for convergence (Hollingsworth & Boyer, 1997; Quintanilla & Ferner, 2003). Similarly, Hall and Soskice (2001) argue that as forces of globalization promote the standardization of elements such as management systems, elements such as local cultures, institutional arrangements, and labor practices manifest the resilience of capitalist variety.

An alternative to the either/or strategies of standardization or maintaining diversity is that taken by transnational organizations (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1995). These organizations combine strong local responsiveness with the ability to exchange and coordinate internationally or globally and thus perform a balancing act (de Wit & Meyer, 2004).

Responses to globalization by HRD professionals in MNCs are influenced by whether the organization tends toward global or international convergence, divergence or toward operating as a “transnational” organization. The global–local issue is very prominent in the international HRM literature (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005). With regard to HR, one side of the debate is that MNCs can reap benefits from the consistency that global, or at least international HR policies provide, noting that these must be balanced against the advantages of sensitivity to the local context. For those organizations that tend toward convergence, there is a requirement for a strong center for global strategy (de Wit & Meyer, 2004). In relation to the HRD function, this strategy has specific implications for each subsidiary of the MNC. Each must reflect the HRD strategies, policies, practices, and approaches taken toward developing people, of the national business system in which it originated. Krempf and Pace (2001) argue that failing to build global HRD practice models places the MNC at risk of “failing to reach mission-critical goals of managing knowledge in multiple locations, supporting diverse cultures and enhancing performance across geographic and national boundaries” (p. 16). Thus, HRD professionals are in a situation where they need to adopt global or international mindsets and influence national organization strategy to correspond with HRD practice in the home-country, ensure HRD interventions encourage a common corporate culture, and enable the dissemination of “best practice” throughout the MNC. Swanson and Holton (2001) highlight how information sharing on national HRD practices in MNCs is essential in building practical, global practice models. They also suggest that the literature is beginning to report explicit models for HRD in response to globalization trends.

The divergence argument suggests that MNCs should segment their processes so that distinct parts are located in different countries. It is argued that there is little incentive to develop standardized policies for groups of workers who differ in terms of their skill levels, the nature of the technologies that they operate, the level of discretion that they are subject to, and so on (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005). Furthermore, Purcell (1999) argues that if organizational strategy is about developing rare and imperfectly imitable competence, then questions of diffusion of HRD are largely irrelevant. De Wit and Meyer (2004) suggest that MNCs that tend toward diversity can regard each country's unique circumstances as an opportunity to be exploited. Each country poses different challenges, requiring different competences. Different national "climates" create opportunities for innovation. National managers need to be responsive to specific local conditions so as to ensure international success. In this context, HRD professionals adopt changing national mindsets to devise specific HRD policies and approaches for each country. They will also need to be cognizant of any implications for the broader international MNC. It can be argued that HRD in diversity orientated MNCs needs to consider how the processes systems, knowledge, and skills of each country can be exploited for the benefit of the larger MNC. Thus, we propose the following:

Proposition 1b: Forces of convergence and divergence influence the way in which HRD professionals in MNCs think about HRD strategy and practice and their role profiles.

A key issue for MNCs concerns interunit linkage and internal operations (Schuler, Dowling, & De Cieri, 1993). Interunit linkages in terms of strategic HRD is concerned with differentiating and integrating the units of the MNC. A key objective for strategic HRD in an MNC context is the need to balance the need for autonomy (thereby facilitating variety and diversity) with the needs of coordination and control (Schuler et al., 1993, p. 328). MNCs achieve this through three particular HR policies and practices (Schuler et al., 1993, p. 1): determining and maintaining staffing levels that are an appropriate mix and flow of parent-country nationals, third-country nationals, and host-country nationals; developing HR policies and practices that link units but allow local adaptation; and using management and leadership development to create shared visions and mindsets and create a pool of global managers (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992; Evans, 1992). With respect to HRD, the implications are obvious. First, the HRD function needs to develop policies that link units but allow local adaptation. For example, an overall HRD philosophy will define the role of HRD in the corporation but does not prescribe how HRD is to be practiced in each unit. Second, leadership development is to the fore of strategic HRM in the global and international context and thus a key component of HRD. Finally, the diversity of the workforce combined with their physical proximity has implications for the ability of individuals and the corporation to learn and

share knowledge. To this end, the HRD professional needs to focus his or her attention on developing structures and processes as well as novel interventions that facilitate and encourage learning across such boundaries or barriers and so maintain the MNC's competitive advantage.

The concept of internal operations focuses each unit within the MNC on working within the confines of its environment and relative to the competitive strategy of the MNC. A major objective of strategic HRD regarding internal operations is to be responsive and effective in the local environment, yet willing and ready to act in a coordinated fashion with the rest of the MNC units (Schuler et al., 1993, p. 330). Schuler et al. (1993) argue that three HR policies and practices are key in executing this objective. The first is matching and adapting HR(D) practices with the competitive strategy of the unit and the local culture and legal system. The second is to create a *modus operandi* whereby these HR(D) practices can be modified to fit changing conditions. The third is creating a set of global HRM(D) policies at the MNC level that can encompass and legitimate the HR(D) practices at local level.

In a similar vein, MNCs seeking to operate as transnational organizations need to perform more of a balancing act, tap into each country's opportunities, and then adapt and leverage the acquired competences and innovations to other countries (de Wit & Meyer, 2004). In this context, the task for the HRD professional is to balance his or her roles of strategic business partner and service provider at both national and international level. The HRD professional needs to devise strategies and develop interventions that use particular competences from one country and enable their exchange and coordination with other countries.

In terms of HRD practice, HRD professionals will need to recognize and differentiate between HRD approaches which can be utilised in a global or international arena with those which can be utilised in the traditional domestic arena. Marquardt et al. (2004) identify particular factors that HRD professionals working in MNCs need to be cognizant of. First, the demographic characteristics of trainees are more diverse in terms of nationality, culture, whether they are host- or home-country employees, learning styles, and language. HRD has a role to play in enabling MNCs, managers, and employees to deal with cultural diversity. This role is not just about developing competences for dealing with cultural diversity and awareness and acceptance of diversity. It is also about facilitating the development of "corporate cultures" that are globally acceptable. This increased diversity also results in greater administration issues for global HRD professionals, including, for example, translating interventions across languages, sensitizing interventions to national cultures and learning and adhering to different national and government practices. The global HRD professional is likely to experience political and economic environments of great diversity. For example, the HRD professional may be in a situation where there are elaborate resources or few resources, operate in demographic environments with booming economies or in environments that

are military controlled, and experiencing negative growth. Finally, the roles and expectations of HRD professionals and their national partners are significantly different across countries and cultures. Whereas some “trainers” command respect in countries where education is highly valued, others may not value such a role. Some HRD partners may value lectures more than discussion, may not permit mixed-gender sessions, or may consider religion more important than education.

The increasing diversity and number of contexts and cultures that HRD professionals of MNCs have to work in necessitates that they either become experts of all contexts and cultures or work with experts of each context and culture. However, it is commonly argued that decisions on many HRD issues are best handled by experts in the local context and culture who are more favorably placed than their counterparts in headquarters to make sure HRD decisions are adapted to respond to specific peculiarities (Dowling & Schuler, 1990). Thus we propose the following:

Proposition 1c: HRD professionals in MNCs will increasingly use a mix of strategies that are both globally and locally responsive and which address the wider competitive focus of the MNC.

It is generally recognized that with the spread and diversity of international business and as organizations from developing nations and transitional economies become more global, the levels of competition will increase (Dowling & Welch, 2004, p. 19). Although globalization creates opportunities for larger markets it also exposes organizations to competitive threats from across the globe (Sadler-Smith, 2006). For example, Levitt (1983) argues that technological change and the “proletarianization” of communications, transport, and travel have caused consumer tastes across the world to converge. This requires organizations to operate as if the entire world was a single entity, and thus it has to compete with numerous other organizations selling the same things in the same way everywhere. However, different MNCs try to compete in different ways, in often fundamentally different markets.

How MNCs deal with these increasing levels of competition is what is fundamentally important here. The research suggests that MNCs in price-sensitive, mass service markets will see labor as a cost and have limited skill requirements. In contrast, organizations that compete in high-level business services, where differentiation of product or service is very important, will invest heavily in skills development (Boxall, 2003). Purcell (1999), therefore, highlights that rather than the universal adoption of best practice approaches to HRD, as would be expected in MNCs tending toward convergence, the issue is one of “fit” between competitive strategy and personnel issues such as HRD.

As competition becomes more intense and global, strategic HRM issues will become more significant (Kobrin, 1992; Sundaram & Black, 1992). A specific HR response coming to the fore as a way of dealing with increasing

levels of competition is that of using human resources as the source of competitive advantage. Purcell (1999) states that organizations will achieve competitive advantage through possessing a "unique set of competencies and distinctive organizational routines" (p. 35). Competitive advantage will be achieved by preparing for continuous change through upgrading and expanding the skills of employees and improving the organizations' knowledge base (Porter, 1998). The learning of an organization's employees is a rare, valuable, and costly-to-imitate form of capital and a core competence for success (Sadler-Smith, 2006). MNCs that possess learning and development competence can face outward to the threats and challenges posed by the external environment. They can also face inward and engage in information and knowledge sharing and collective learning and thus enable the creation of new knowledge and better products and services (Sugarman, 2001).

Global competition and the increasing power of MNCs has also resulted in an increase in the number of mergers and acquisitions (M&As) and strategic alliances (Dowling & Welch, 2004). Mergers and acquisitions present significant challenges for HRD professionals. These include issues related to linking units, developing a common corporate culture, mission and vision, and putting structures in place to facilitate information and knowledge sharing and learning across the merged units. Iles (1996) discusses the role of HRD in alliances and partnerships. He notes that alliances and partnerships involve more than sharing money, technology, and products; they also involve sharing people and HRD practices. Often, collaboration is limited to specific activities, as in other areas the partners remain competitors. Whereas, he argues, in alliances such as joint ventures more interaction is required, perhaps including a blending of national and corporate cultures and practices. As alliances are set up to deal with increasing global competition, Iles (1996) proposes that there needs to be a set of International HRD (IHRD) guidelines so that HRD can maximize the benefits of strategic alliances and reduce their disadvantages. Given that strategic alliances are frequently entered into to promote learning, HRD professionals need to remove any barriers to organizational learning in such environments. Pucik (1988) highlights that barriers to the sharing of learning may include structural factors, HR planning factors, recruitment and selection, training and development, and appraisal and reward factors. There is a greater need, in alliances, to focus on managing information, knowledge, and learning across geographically dispersed units, while protecting the core knowledge and sharing that which will prove advantageous. Thus we propose the following:

Proposition 1d: HRD professionals in MNCs will increasingly focus on using learning and knowledge management strategies and practices to deal with increasing levels of competition.

Evident from the preceding discussion is that there are many factors in the external and internal environment of MNCs, which influence the HRD

function and consequently the role of and decisions taken by the HRD professional. Although the key factors are highlighted and attempts made to discuss the implications for HRD, the discussion is by no means exhaustive. The changing context of the work environment of HRD professionals emphasizes the importance of human resources. Human resources have a very important role to play in organizations of the future, and they are increasingly being recognized as a source of competitive advantage. The overriding suggestion is that these contextual changes may have increased the power of the HRD function. However, such achievement and “power” are only likely to be obtained where the HRD professional adopts roles suited to his or her particular contextual circumstances. The HRD professional must show that he or she can obtain and sustain competitive advantage for the MNC.

The Changing Roles of HRD Professionals

Traditionally, HRD as a functional activity was highly centralized and operated using activity-based HRD strategies (Gilley & Gilley, 2003; Robinson & Robinson, 1989). The primary responsibility of HRD professionals in this context was focused on identifying, selecting, and evaluating training programs from a myriad of outside training houses or vendors and addressing individual employee performance issues through customizing or designing training interventions. Thus, the training intervention was the focus of HRD (Gilley et al., 2003). HRD professionals operating in an activity-based HRD function are considered transactional professionals (Gilley, Maycunich, & Quatro, 2002). Internal customers purchase their services (training programs) to solve immediate or short-term problems at the individual or team level. As activity-based and transactional professionals, HRD professionals could also be described as having a maintenance orientation and using traditional approaches to training, development, and education. The HRD professional traditionally provided many training activities and developed partnerships with departmental and divisional managers. However, these were often short-term engagements that did not require or necessitate serious dialogue or follow-up. Equally, training activities and interactions of this nature were not likely to have strategic links (Gilley et al., 2003).

Although this approach to HRD may still prove effective for those MNCs that pursue low labor-cost strategy, it is likely to have limited effectiveness in a global context. For example, where HRD professionals use tried and tested programs and delivery methods in a copy-exact manner throughout the MNC, they may be rejected or at least considered ineffective where it has not accounted for cultural variations.

Thus in recent years, the HRD professional's roles changed to deal with environmental forces. The preceding commentary illuminated the greater emphasis and value placed on human resources as a source of competitive advantage. Also highlighted is the recognition that knowledge sharing,

continuous learning, and developing unique competencies are important activities through which to obtain competitive advantage through people. Additionally, management development was identified as a means through which to enable MNCs maintain a sense of unity. The implications for HR/HRD discussed throughout provide indications of how HRD activities are now of strategic importance.

The HRD function, which focuses more on results-based and strategically integrated HRD strategies aims to improve individual, team, and more importantly organizational performance and effectiveness (Torraco & Swanson, 1995; Wognum & Mulder, 1999). Results-driven programmes focus on implementing and managing change to improve organizational effectiveness. Thus, the orientation is more for change and interventionist approaches to training, development, and education (Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983; Pettigrew, Jones, & Reason, 1982). HRD professionals operating in results-based, change-oriented HRD functions are transformational professionals (Gilley & Gilley, 2002); the service provided is aimed at helping the organization to achieve its strategic goals through change and development interventions. This leads to HRD professionals operating in strategic partnership roles (Kaufman, 1986; Robinson & Robinson, 1989), and it results in more commitment and a positive attitude toward training and development (Wognum, 2001).

These transitions from activity-based to results-based models of HRD operation, transactional to transformational HRD professional roles, maintenance to change orientations, traditional to interventionist approaches, and national to global mindsets require HRD professionals to perform new roles and be more focused on meeting the needs of and facilitating key groups in and connected to the organization. Evident from the preceding discussion is that HRD practitioners perform a multiplicity of roles in organizations, and these roles are continuously evolving. Studies dating back to the 1970s have aimed to identify and classify these roles (McArdle & Edwards, 2004; McLagan, 1996; Nijhof, 2004; Pettigrew et al., 1982; Spoor & Bennett, 1984; Tjepkema, ter Horst, Mulder, & Scheerens, 2000). Generally, HRD roles are progressing toward those of change agent, internal consultant, and strategic business partner (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2005; Kenton & Yarnall, 2005; McLagan, 1996; Nijhof, 2004; Tjepkema et al., 2000; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Table 1 summarizes the HRD professional's role titles, the perspective that these roles most adhere to, and the role descriptions. Figure 1 illustrates HRD role titles as they transition from and between the various operating perspectives.

Defining the HRD Professional's Role in MNCs

Although it is a challenge for HRD professionals in MNCs as to how to best organize their roles to engage strategically and create value, while also engaging at appropriate operational levels, moves toward this higher level of

TABLE 1: HRD Roles, Perspectives, and Descriptions*

<i>Perspective</i>	<i>HRD Role</i>	<i>Role Description</i>
Activity-based Transactional Maintenance Traditional	Learning agent/instructor	Individual responsible for presenting information to employees in a meaningful, manageable way
	Trainer	Adopts a "sit back and wait for clients to come forward" approach and then provides training aimed at maintenance and improvement but not major change (Pettigrew et al., 1982)
	Learning facilitator	Provides training to maintain smooth running of organization. Adopts traditional educational practices. Responds to requests for training (i.e., passive and reactive; Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983)
	Training officer	Someone skilled in the design and development of performance improvement interventions. Customizes training programs to better fit the organizational culture (Gilley, Egglund & Gilley, 2002)
Activity-based Transactional Maintenance Traditional	Passive provider	Concerned with the maintenance and improvement of performance but without major change (Pettigrew et al., 1982)
	Caretaker	Facilitates reengineering of organizational processes through operating in a shared services model; handles all transactional services, and administration. The shared services model frees up time for greater strategic involvement (Ulrich, 2001)
	Instructional designer	To identify and analyze stimuli within the system that may affect performance, responses that are emitted, and the consequence of those responses to uncover root causes of performance inadequacy. Adopts a total systems approach to organizational performance (Stolovich & Keeps, 1999)
Results-based Transformational Maintenance Change Traditional Interventionist Partnership	Provider	In between the role of provider and change agent, no longer simply provides content to provide courses but aims to have a more proactive & influential role (Pettigrew et al., 1982)
	Administrative expert (shared services)	HR specialist expert (centers of excellence)
	Performance engineer	
	Role in transition	
	Educator	
Evangelist	Relationship builder	
	Employee champion	
HR specialist expert (centers of excellence)		

(continued)

TABLE 1: (continued)

<i>Perspective</i>	<i>HRD Role</i>	<i>Role Description</i>
		Concerned with training to maintain present systems and procedures. Adopts learner-centered approaches. Facilitator of learning rather than subject expert (Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983)
		Recognizes need for training to change systems and procedures. Adopts traditional educational approaches. Anticipates the need for change (Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983)
		Possess specialist knowledge of leading-edge HR solutions. Aims to deliver competitive business advantages through HR innovations in specialist areas such as learning and talent management (Ulrich, 2007)
Results-based Transformational	Organizational architect	Concerned with the critical components of an organization and their congruency or incongruency, which ultimately determines the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. Requires that they demonstrate knowledge of how multiple systems work in harmony to achieve targeted results (Gilley & Gilley, 2003)
Partnership		Someone who negotiates organizational obstacles. They address clients' attitudes toward HRD, which establishes a level of credibility which provides them with a source of power from which to make recommendations, provide suggestions and share ideas useful to the organization (Gilley & Gilley, 2003)
Results-based Transformational Leadership	Political navigator	Promotion and facilitation of strategically focused learning and development processes, particularly at divisional and corporate levels (Harrison, 2003)
Results-based Transformational	Change agent	Recognizes need for training to change systems and procedures. Attempts to understand real needs and causes. Acts as a persuasive, problem-solving catalyst for change (Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983)
Interventionist Change	Change champion	
Leadership	Innovator	Main concern is with regard to organizational development and complex issues around cultural change (Pettigrew et al., 1982)
		Manages transformation and change. Ensuring capacity for change. (Ulrich, 2001)

(continued)

TABLE 1: (continued)

Perspective	HRD Role	Role Description
Results-based Transformational Interventionist Change Professional	HRD consultant Innovator	<p>Searches for problems, engages in root-cause analyses, and synthesizes solutions to them. Acts in service to organization. Focuses on changes required and/or desired rather than individuals and/or isolated elements involved (Walton, 1999)</p> <p>Engages in business partnership to ensure learning and development at any level, achieves added value (Harrison, 2003)</p> <p>Recognizes need for interventions to change systems and procedures. Attempts to understand real needs and causes. Acts as a persuasive, problem-solving catalyst for change (Bennett & Leduchowicz, 1983)</p> <p>Consultants who adopt a directive approach lead the project, initiate, and direct the activities involved (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986)</p> <p>A position in which a person has some influence over an individual, group or organization, but who has no direct power to make changes or implement programs (Block, 1981)</p>
Results-based Partnership Professional Leadership	Business partner Strategist	<p>Works alongside senior managers. Provides the link between business and organizational strategies. Provides support and challenges the senior team and develops credible initiatives for cost reduction (Holbeche, 1999)</p> <p>Works closely with senior business leaders on strategy execution, in particular designing HR systems and processes that address strategic business issues. Focuses on being more business-focused, which translates into being more customer-focused, cost efficient, innovative, and structured in such a way that it can quickly respond to changing priorities. Aligning HR and business strategy. Engages in organizational diagnosis (Ulrich, 2001)</p>

(continued)

TABLE 1: (continued)

<i>Perspective</i>	<i>HRD Role</i>	<i>Role Description</i>
Dependent on perspective taken by function	Training manager Learning and development manager/ Director	Management of the learning and development function across the organization (Harrison, 2003) Concerned with the smooth running of the training function (Pettigrew et al., 1982) Performs typical managerial duties. This means planning, organizing, directing and controlling the function (Laird, Naquin, Holton, 2003)
Dependent on perspective taken by function	HRD leader	HRD leadership involves emphasizing the importance of HRD for the organization and its staff, creating a vision and strategic direction for the HRD function, and working in collaboration with stakeholders to create a vision and strategic direction for the organization and its employees. It also involves establishing a culture that facilitates this journey

a. Developed from material by Gilley and Gilley (2003), Marquardt, Berger, and Loan (2004), Phillips and Shaw (1998), Laird et al. (2003), Sadler-Smith, (2006), Pettigrew et al. (1982), Bennett and Leduchowicz (1983), Pinto and Walker (1978), and Nadler (1969).

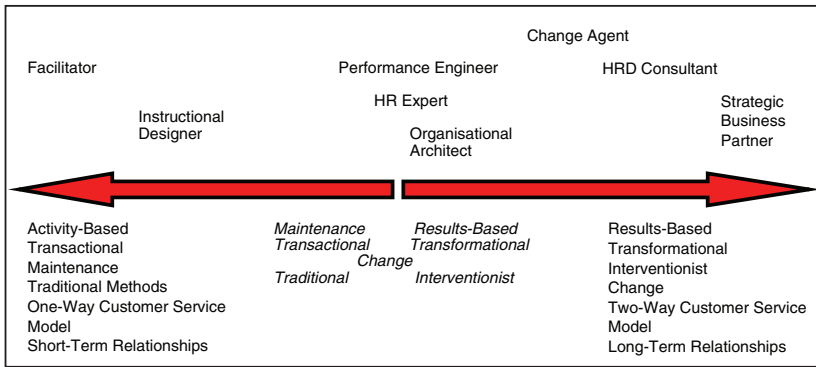


FIGURE 1: HRD Role Transitions

strategic involvement are evident. A number of approaches through which progression is enabled are identified. These included the utilization of corporate HRD functions, service centers and embedded HRD professionals, operational executors, and centers of expertise (Caldwell, 2008; Reilly, 2000; Reilly, Tamkin, & Broughton, 2007; Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, & Younger, 2007). Also, HRD is being decentralized (Gibb, 2003; Megginson, Joy-Matthews, & Banfield, 1993; Walton, 1999), and activity-based functions are devolved to the line (de Jong, Leenders, & Thijssen, 1999; Gibb, 2003; Maxwell & Watson, 2004; Upton, Egan, & Lynham, 2003).

Those who work in corporate HRD roles are likely to be concerned with devising strategies that contribute to the creation of a consistent MNC-wide culture, which give effect to the CEO’s agenda. Corporate HRD professionals aim to ensure that HRD activities throughout the MNC are aligned to business goals (Reilly & Williams, 2006). This suggests that HRD strategies will not operate in a vacuum. They will form an integrated and holistic framework that includes a number of key elements, such as shared values, organizational structures, and leadership styles. Corporate HRD professionals will emphasize a “configurational” approach (Drecker & Doherty, 2001). This approach emphasizes vertical and horizontal alignment and a contingency perspective. Horizontal integration or fit is particularly significant for MNCs seeking alignment across national and cultural boundaries. The emphasis on shared values stresses the development of a corporate culture, supportive of a particular HRD strategy. The extent to which a HRD strategy is implemented and institutionalized at operational level is related to the values “in use” rather than the values espoused. Therefore, corporate HRD professionals will, play a major role in articulating shared values. Thus we propose the following:

Proposition 2a: HRD professionals in MNC corporate roles will focus on organization-wide corporate cultures, implementation of the CEO's agenda, and alignment of HRD strategies to business goals.

Developments in new technology have facilitated the emergence of service centers to carry out more transactional aspects of HRD. Such centers are considered to provide economies of scale, meet employee needs, and resolve concerns by fewer dedicated HR resources. They also facilitate standardization of HRD processes (Redman, Snape, Wass, & Hamilton, 2007). Such a model is considered strongly integrationist in terms of information systems and processes. Caldwell (2007) describes shared services as "HR re-centralized" with a twist. End users mandate both what is delivered and the service level. A particular variation of the shared service model focuses on self-service, e-HR. E-HR is considered to represent an overall push to devolve HR responsibilities to line managers and employees. Lawler and Mohrman (2003) and Lawler, Ulrich, Fitz-Erc, and Madden (2003) suggest that e-HR may allow HRD professionals to become more strategic because of the opportunity to offload routine or transactional HRD administration. However, commentators suggest that it results in depersonalization of the HRD function (Ruel, Bondarouk, & Looise, 2004). Some MNCs are outsourcing transactional HRM and HRD activities. Outsourcing rests on the premise that knowledge can be accessed without ownership. It enables HRD to be shared across boundaries (Scott-Jackson, Newham, & Gurney, 2005).

In MNCs that use shared service approaches, HRD professionals will more likely work in business units. They will work directly with line managers and the organizational unit's leadership team to clarify unit strategy, deliver supportive HRD strategies, and ensure effective leadership of HRD within the unit (Brown et al., 2004). The evidence suggests that MNCs have dispersed "HR partners" to the business while seeking to ensure the strategic integration of HRD (Hunter, Saunders, Boroughs, & Constance, 2006). As a concept, embedded HRD professionals... and "performance and measurement of key HRD investments (Hailey, Farnedale, & Truss, 2005; Rynes, 2004). However, there is concern that such an embedded strategy may have negative and unexpected consequences (Reilly 2007). As a concept, embedded HRD professionals are expected to engage in and support business unit strategy discussions, they define requirements to meet business unit goals and highlight problems that may prevent goal achievement, they select HRD practices that best ensure the delivery of business unit strategies, and they focus on performance and measurement of key HRD investments (Hailey, Farnedale, & Truss, 2005; Rynes, 2004).

Business partnering provides significant challenges for HRD professionals in the MNC context. They are expected to be strategic and conduct organizational diagnosis; however, the reality may be different. They are often totally absorbed by operational HRD issues that conflict with the strategic focus they are

expected to perform. They may spend a significant amount of time on individual issues (Wright, 2008). HRD professionals working within the business unit are frequently overwhelmed with a large number of change initiatives emanating from corporate HRD. They are expected to be on top of a large number of corporate initiatives. They are encouraged to be strategic by their line managers, but the corporate center expects them to be involved in implementation. This conflict suggests that HRD professionals as business partners, have difficult decisions to make concerning whether they become part of the business unit, and as a result develop a “solo mentality” or whether they choose to work with corporate HRD function and/or centers of expertise. Wright (2008) questions whether the assimilation of HRD professionals into managerial and consultancy roles with a direct business unit impact, enables them to be effective HRD partners. Others have suggested that the move toward business partnering may narrow the virtues of professional expertise (Kochan, 2004).

As a response to some of the confusions emerging in the business partnering or embedded HRD approach, the role of operational executors emerged whose focus is on operational HRD activities (Ulrich et al., 2008). This role requires that the HRD professional is execution- and implementation-focused rather than strategic. Operational executors are expected to possess project management skills, team skills, skills in managing priorities and workloads, and maintaining a business focus. Thus we propose the following:

Proposition 2b: MNCs are likely to use a combination of shared services and embedded HRD as strategies to ensure that HRD professionals deliver supportive HRD strategies that are of value to the business unit.

Centers of expertise are increasingly used by MNCs as a way of delivering HRM and HRD professional services. It allows the MNC to deliver HRD as a specialist service at the corporate center or as a distributed activity, which is brokered through HRD consultancy services to the line. The rationale for a center of expertise is to achieve economies of skill. Centers of expertise work in a competitive way in that embedded HRD professionals may go to the center for help before using the expertise of external vendors. Their legitimacy and continuity depend on how much value is placed on the services they provide. In the context of HRD, a center of expertise will play a number of important roles. Ulrich et al. (2008) identify six role dimensions: the creation of service menus that are aligned with the capabilities driving business strategy; the diagnosis of development needs and the suggestion of appropriate solutions; collaboration with HRD professionals in business partner roles to deliver HRD services; the creation of new services to meet the changing demands of the business; the management of service provision, and the development of a learning community within the MNC.

Centers of expertise are typically embedded in shared services models and represent another indicator of the recentralization of HRD to ensure that it is integrated and more customer-facing. In larger MNCs, multiple centers of

expertise may be distributed to different divisions or business units. This will likely occur where the MNC is highly diversified (Caldwell, 2007). In situations where there is a strong HRD function, a variety of centers of expertise may be found in the corporate center. Centers of expertise are potentially challenging for the HRD professional. In particular, they may become out of touch with the reality of the business unit and fall into the one-size-fits-all trap. The evidence suggests that HR business partners may be reluctant to use the services of centers of expertise for reasons of personal credibility or the lack of appropriateness of what the center provides (Deloitte Consulting, 2006). Also, centers of expertise may become over stretched and, as a result, neglect business units.

An alternative to the center of expertise model concerns the devolution of HRD to the line. Line managers are increasingly given key responsibilities for the delivery of HRD. These stakeholders are frequently involved in decisions concerning HRD interventions, resource allocation and evaluation, and are key enablers of transfer of learning (Ellinger, 2004; Rouillier & Goldstein, 1993). Devolution to the line is challenging for HRD professionals. Cascon-Pereira, Valverde, and Ryan (2006) argue that the term *devolution* is overused in the HR context, and there is confusion concerning devolution and decentralization. Devolution focuses on changes in the allocation of authority. Decentralization and devolution do not necessarily come together, and it is possible to have some element of decentralization but little in terms of devolution. This may occur as managers are reluctant to have responsibility for HR activities (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). HRD professionals need the active support of line managers as although managers and supervisors can play a crucial role in making training pay off in performance improvement, their commitment and ability to do so is often flawed (Holton & Baldwin, 2003), which can negatively influence perceptions of HRD (Gubbins, Garavan, Hogan, & Woodlock, 2006).

The corporate HRD function, service center, embedded HRD, operational executors, centers of expertise, and HRD devolution to the line approaches to organizing HRD professional roles can also be seen to represent the centralizing and decentralizing dynamics that MNCs may engage in to organize HRD practice for effective operational and strategic integration. Thus we propose the following:

Proposition 2c: HRD professionals in MNCs are required to work within a combination of centralized and decentralized approaches for the delivery of HRD practices.

The Imperatives of Social Capital and Social Networking

Changing external environmental circumstances and the specific characteristics of the MNC context illuminate the need for HRD professionals to adopt

new roles and reconsider how to organize these roles so as to deliver “value” to the MNC. This combined with evidence that there are challenges to engaging in these new roles and evidence that HR/HRD professionals are not moving toward the roles of strategic business partnering (Holbeche, 2008; Wognum, 2001) presents the question as to what competencies HRD professionals need to enable them to engage in these new roles. Holbeche (2008) emphasized that HR professionals needed new skills, most notably consultancy, relationship management, and business acumen. Also, implicit in many of the role configurations is the need to ensure role legitimacy based on senior management acceptance of the HRD professionals’ expertise, rather than issues of power. Advocates of the various roles emphasize the need for HRD professionals to develop top-class influencing, relationship and networking skills (Kenton & Moody, 2003). Evident from the preceding discussions and review is that there is the increasing need for HRD professionals to develop multiple, more enduring, and reciprocal relationships with organizational stakeholders.

Drawing from the discussion of the previous sections of this article, a number of illustrations of the imperatives of social capital and social networking competency can be illuminated. The influence of globalization on HRD professionals’ roles requires that global HRD professionals in MNCs need to increase the quantity and quality of linkages and improve communication with international suppliers, subsidiaries, alliance partners, and customers (Parker, 1996). In an effort to ensure that any practices or information is transferred and understood or adapted to suit national and cultural differences, the global HRD professional needs to develop strong relationships with those best placed in the local context to respond to and deal with the national peculiarities. They need to develop their knowledge and understanding of the specific contextual factors of the MNC subsidiaries, which influence design of global HRD strategies. This requires that they engage with and build relationships with those in the subsidiaries that can provide them with such knowledge and facilitate its transfer. MNC HRD professionals cannot be experts of all the environmental and contextual factors facing each subsidiary. To facilitate the development of global HRD strategy and culture requires interunit knowledge sharing and learning. This requires HRD professionals engaging with employees and HRD representatives of other subsidiaries. To gain competitive advantage through combining and developing knowledge and continuous learning among human resources requires access to valuable social resources, that is, people. In the case of mergers and alliances, it is the ability of the HRD professional to build relationships between these newly integrated units that will result in returns for the organization in the form of knowledge sharing and learning.

In addition to HRD professionals building their personal bank of social capital, these new roles necessitate that they develop relationships so as to facilitate the development of social networks and consequently the social capital of others in the MNC. To develop a corporate HRD culture requires that HRD professionals facilitate relationship building and the development of

knowledge sharing and learning networks between units. Interunit and transnational learning and knowledge-sharing networks contribute to the organizations' efforts at attaining competitive advantage through innovation, entrepreneurship, and continuous learning.

Such factors illuminate how social capital is an important asset for the HRD professional. HRD professionals need to focus on three categories of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The structural dimension concerns "the properties of the social system and of the network of relations as a whole" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 244) and thus incorporates network configuration (Krackhardt, 1989). This dimension of social capital points to the need for HRD professionals to be concerned with network characteristics, such as the number, strength, and density of ties in their network and its appropriateness to their role. For example, HRD professionals need to consider their network and the linkages it provides to line, middle, senior managers, HRD professionals in other subsidiaries, and/or employees of the MNC subsidiaries with beneficial social resources. The relational dimension describes the kind of personal relationships people have developed with each other through a history of interactions (Granovetter, 1992). Among the key facets of this cluster are trust and trustworthiness (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993), norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995), obligations and expectations (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990; Granovetter, 1985), and identity and identification (Merton, 1968). Relational social capital is influential in enabling transfer of beneficial social resources throughout the HRD professional's network. Thus, the HRD professional needs to consider his/her network in terms of the characteristics it possesses that are conducive to both access to beneficial social resources and transfer of these resources (see Hansen, 1999). For example, the HRD professional requires the line manager's cooperation and involvement in identifying training needs, designing training and development interventions that meet these needs, facilitating transfer of learning, and evaluating transfer of learning to the job. Cognitive social capital is also important, because it enables shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among stakeholders. It highlights both shared goals and shared culture (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). This dimension to the HRD professionals' network is instrumental in communications and facilitating the transfer and combination of knowledge between stakeholders. Thus, we propose the following:

Proposition 3a: The increasing complexity of environmental and contextual factors of MNCs results in a greater need for the successful HRD professional to develop his or her bank of appropriate social capital.

The review of the changing nature of HRD professional's roles also reveals the importance of social capital and social networking competency. The transnational HRD professional who operates as a learning agent disseminates

information and interacts with learner's experiences (Gilley et al., 2002, p. 163). The transformational HRD professional who performs the role of performance engineer positions the HRD professional in a situation where he or she needs to interact with clients, subordinates, peers, and other professionals potentially affected by the performance breakdown (Stolovitch, Keeps, & Rodrigue, 1999, p. 158). It is suggested that HRD leaders who attend purposes but neglect partnering often fail in their work (Bellmen, 1998). The HRD professional's role of internal consultant, hinges on the personal and professional relationships established by the HRD professional (Prete & Boschetti, 1990). The internal consultant's role in MNCs mandates the HRD professional to interact with line managers and other professionals and adapt internal consultancy models of practice. Furthermore, the use of external consultants has also increased due to a number of factors including the underdeveloped consulting skills of managers and supervisors (Gilley et al., 2002; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986). The critical skill and knowledge requirements of these HRD consultants include client relationship building skills (Gilley et al., 2002). Strategic business partners need to build collaborative relationships with and work closely with business leaders, collaborate with other functions, communicate with employees (CIPD, 2005), and maintain their expertise through information and knowledge sharing with peers, professional associations, and other organizations. They must build relationships of trust with the business leader and the team so as to perform their coaching role (Ulrich & Beatty, 2001). They must also develop relationships with top management team members in the organization and across any subsidiaries to develop strategies to effectively use the competences of individual units. HRD professionals who work in centers of expertise need to build relationships with managers in business units as well as those in corporate HRD.

The traditional transactional roles adopted by HRD professionals illuminate that where HRD professionals fail to build appropriate social networks to match their role requirements, they may fail in the necessary task of adding "value" to the MNC. For example, where the HRD professional continues to network on a short-term basis with line managers and employees only, as was typical of traditional HRD roles, and not develop long-term collaborative relationships with strategic business partners, they are likely to fail in the necessary task of managing and creating knowledge and developing strategies that contribute to competitive advantage. As HRD roles becomes more important at the strategic level, the HRD professional who operates in a transformative capacity must develop collaborative relationships with senior management to identify change champions and facilitate change. Cooperation between all those involved at strategic level—top, middle, and lower executive management, as well as national, international, and global HRD representatives—is necessary to arrive at strategically aligned HRD interventions (Wognum, 2001). Results-driven HRD professionals must also build strategic business partnerships throughout the organization as a means to facilitate change. Gilley

et al. (2003) identify that these HRD professionals are responsible for serving as agents of change and responsible for organizational development partnerships, which improve the organization's performance capacity and effectiveness.

Thus, with the evolution of the HRD professional's role comes multiple "customers." Wang's (2003) two-way customer service model is one such model, which is concerned with the relationship element of HRD professionals' roles. It recognizes the increasing need for HRD professionals to build reciprocal rather than one-way relationships. This model proposes that the HRD profession is a bidirectional customer service profession. On the one hand, the HRD professional is the service provider, providing, for example, training solutions, advice, and guidance on change interventions to customers with a need or problem to address. However, under the auspices of traditional, customer service models, this would require the HRD professional to give customers what they want and not necessarily what they need. For example, the HRD professional may after some analysis of the situation recognize that the organization's problems reside with management and not with employees. The client organization may request training or a change intervention at employee level believing that to be the source of the problem. The HRD professional has to decide whether to provide what the client wants—employee training—or what the client needs—management intervention. Operating under a one-way customer service model (Holton, 1998, 2003), the HRD professional will provide what the client wants—employee training. However, HRD professionals who wish to maintain their professional integrity will operate under the two-way customer service model. In this capacity, the client needs to meet the HRD professional's needs for information, support, and collaboration so that the ultimate customer—the client—receives what is needed. Wang's (2003) discussion highlights the HRD professional's role as customer service provider and receiver and thus the importance of mutually collaborative relationships with multiple customers. Thus, we propose the following:

Proposition 3b: HRD professionals in MNCs must serve multiple customers, which necessitates that they possess strong, social networking competency.

Conclusions

Forces of globalization are changing the work environment and roles played by HRD professionals. This is particularly evident for those HRD professionals operating in MNCs. The MNC context is a complex one: The distinctive characteristics of MNCs are manifest in the multiple units, cultural differences, and the geographical distribution of units. Increasingly, HRD professionals are expected to add value to the organization and facilitate competitive advantage. In the MNC context, this expectation has additional complexity to a domestic organization in the form of forces of convergence and divergence. Therefore, HRD professional's strategies-in-use are influenced by the global and local

context as well as the drive for competitive advantage. Consequently, the roles of HRD professionals are expanding, changing, and/or evolving in response to these external environmental and internal organizational factors. MNCs can organize HRD roles in a multiplicity of ways. These include shared services, centers of expertise, corporate HRD functions, embedded or strategic partnering, and devolving HRD to the line. Ultimately, HRD professionals are required to adopt new roles. These new roles present HRD professionals with new challenges and necessitate the development of new competences.

Social capital and social networking have become increasingly important. Key competency dimensions focus on building relationships, social networking, communication and interpersonal skills, as well as knowledge and understanding of social capital. HRD professionals' work has an increasingly dynamic quality. They manage different projects and activities that require diverse information and expertise. They have to interact with many subsidiaries, departments, functions, and groupings, particularly where HRD is recognized as a shared responsibility (Gilley & Coffern, 1994; Gilley & Gilley, 2003; Tjepkema, ter Horst, & Mulder, 2002). They must foster multiple sets of relationships. Therefore, to be effective, HRD professionals need to understand and know how to develop valuable networks. They have to continuously monitor their networks and may need to create new networks when faced with a new problem or opportunity.

There is also evidence that the work of the HRD professional is increasingly knowledge-intensive work. Key functions include facilitating knowledge sharing and development, supporting and enhancing learning, and operating as a source of expertise for others involved in delivering HRD (Gourlay, 2001; Tjepkema et al., 2000). HRD professionals are frequently required to solve novel and challenging problems, for example when operating in a strategic partnership role (Gilley & Gilley, 2003), and when they are responsible for facilitating learning (Tjepkema et al., 2002). They are therefore reliant on contacts that are willing to cooperate and engage in knowledge sharing and development, with them as receivers of such knowledge as business acumen.

HRD professionals in MNCs therefore operate as a customer service provider and receiver and in a knowledge-intensive and dynamic environment. They are essentially, socially dependent and need to be effective networkers in order to add value to the MNC. Without the support and collaboration of relevant stakeholders they are less likely to gain legitimacy and have the power to implement initiatives that require resources and buy-in to be effective, feasible, and a source of competitive advantage (Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003).

Implications for Research and Practice

To work effectively in this context, it is evident that the HRD professional's stock of social capital will be important in determining his or her ability to access requisite benefits, such as tacit and explicit knowledge, information,

resources, and support. Indeed, Tjepkema et al. (2000) found that for HRD professionals, communication with managers and employees was a key strategy for changing their views on the need for learning and gaining their support and involvement in realizing the HRD professional's role. Social capital is also valuable in enabling the HRD professional to assert and communicate how HRD can facilitate the MNC in managing the external environment and developing a competitive strategy. Networking is valued in itself, by HRD professionals, as a developmental activity (Jones & Fear, 1994; Knapp, 1995). HRD professionals thus need to be concerned with gaining an understanding of social capital accumulation strategies and developing their social networking competency. This knowledge and competency is vital for developing their personal bank of social capital. It needs to account for the need for multiple relationships and thus a large network. It needs to identify those relationships that need to be strong, reciprocal, and long-lasting. It needs to focus on relationships that provide valuable and requisite resources, such as information, support, power, and so on, which aid their efforts at successfully performing as per how their role is organized and defined.

The HRD professional needs knowledge and competency on social networking to do his or her work: developing systems and strategies for organizational knowledge management, developing a learning organization and facilitating organizational and collective learning, facilitating change, developing and managing employee and organizational social capital, and effectively targeting HRD interventions (see Storberg & Gubbins, 2007, for further discussion on the importance of social networks to do HRD).

There is value in studying how social capital concepts (such as networking and relationship building) enable HRD professionals to access key stakeholders and the necessary resources, information, and support to perform their role effectively and make a valuable contribution to the organization. Despite widespread research using a network or social capital perspective in other disciplines and a few articles concerned with social capital and social networking concepts in the HRD field (Cross & Parker, 2004; Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 2003; Storberg, 2002; Storberg & Gubbins, 2007), there are few that focus specifically on the importance or role of social networking competency for HRD professionals' roles (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). There is a need for greater theoretical discussion and empirical investigation on the importance of, role of, and influence of social networking competence and practice for particular HRD professionals' roles, for HRD professionals' efforts at progressing toward more strategic roles, and for HRD professionals operating in the particular environment of the MNC.

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