



National Human Resource Growth: A Multi-Level Viewpoint

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Abstract: *The literature indicates that, in terms of the number of countries we are aware of, we have only just begun to scratch the surface, despite the fact that there have been some studies on national human resource development and HRD practices in certain nations. Research on HRD practices and policies in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Mali, and Togo is reviewed in this exploratory study. HRD practices in a few chosen nations were compared, and national HRD policies were looked at.*

Keywords: *Comparative HRD, International HRD, National HRD.*

INTRODUCTION

The availability and interchange of information across countries has significantly improved due to significant advancements in the field of information technology. The current perception of human resource development has been influenced by the information revolution. According to Metcalfe and Reese (2005), the academic field of HRD originated in the United States. Nonetheless, the US commonly accepted definitions of HRD are narrowly focused on businesses and lack comprehensiveness (Kuchinke, 2003; McLean, 2004). A comprehensive understanding of HRD would consider issues on a national and international level (McLean, 2004). This methodology serves as a framework for continuous study on human resource development strategies and policies in many nations. "It is clear that the field of human resource management is evolving, that new data is being produced, and that the complexity and diversity of performance standards will only increase" (Obinna & Ekweozor, 2024).

This study presents an analysis of these seven countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, Niger, Mali, and Togo. The study suggests contrasting and comparing various nations' HRD laws and practices. Given the very intricate, varied, and diverse political, social, and economic features of these civilizations, it will be advantageous for HRD scholars to understand how HRD systems operate in these countries.

Problem Statement

McLean and McLean (2001), who also inspired the need to study HRD in other countries, laid the groundwork for understanding HRD in a national perspective. In recent years, a number of studies have attempted to investigate HRD at the national level. The United States, Brazil, Canada, China, Kenya, Korea, India, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, St. Lucia, Sultanate of Oman, Taiwan, and Korea have all conducted exploratory research on HRD practices and policies. (Ahn & McLean, 2006; Budhwar, Al- Yahmadi & Debrah, 2002; Dirani, 2006; Hasler, Thompson, Schuler; 2006; Cooper, 2004; Lien & McLean, 2004; Lutta-Mukhebi, 2004; Yang et al, 2004; Ke, Chermack, Li & Lin, 2006; Rao, 2004; Rangel, 2004; McLean (2006), Nijhof, 2004; Paprock, Yumol & Atienza, 2006; Szalkowski & Jankowicz, 2004; Osman-Gani, 2004; Lynham, Cunningham, 2004; Scotland, 2004; Lee, 2004; McLagan, 1989). There have also been some training and development focused studies in Asia (Alzalabani, 2002; Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003) and Europe (Heraty & Collings, 2006; Hytonen, 2003; Lehner & Dikany, 2003; Lucio & Stewart, 2003; Skule, Stuart & Nyen, 2002). A lot of these countries consider development and training to be a part of developing their human resources.

The aforementioned studies highlight the progress made in researching HRD practices and policies across the world, but they also highlight the paucity of knowledge regarding HRD outside of North America, Europe, West Africa, and a few Asian countries. This suggests that many countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa have not yet had their HRD practices and policies examined. Moreover, our understanding of previously studied countries is fractured and insufficient (Metcalf and Reese, 2005). To put it another way, although if research on HRD has been carried out in several countries, there is still more to be done in terms of what and how we study. Examining developments in HRD (global or cross-enterprise) is important because it helps "discourse wider economic and social goals that advance good governance systems and human resource competences (Metcalf & Reese, 2005). Refocusing HRD research is crucial on significant issues that impact HRD policy at the national level (McLean, (2006). NHRD should be used as a means of addressing major developmental challenges that face nations worldwide. Therefore, scholars that are interested in human resource development should focus on two areas: There are two things that need to be considered: 1) investigating NHRD policies and practices in nations where no previous study has been conducted; and 2) broadening our focus to encompass some fundamental developmental difficulties that have not been previously examined.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The review's scope includes basic HRD research. Among other HR practices, there are no conversations about hiring, compensation, or employee turnover. The following criteria helped us to specify and narrow down our search: (1) National human resource development research (2) Research on career development methods, organizational development, and training and development conducted both domestically and internationally. Only credible, peer-reviewed HRD journals that were included in the methodology section were included in our search. Since

the goal of our article is to examine the meaning of HRD in various national contexts, it is imperative that we examine some of the seminal academic works that shaped the field's evolution. HRD was initially introduced as an idea or concept in the 1960s. It is now acknowledged that the term "human resource development" was originally defined by Harbison and Myers in 1964 (Personal Communication, AHRD conference, 2005). Human resource development (HRD) is defined as "a process of increasing the capacities, knowledge, and skills of all members of a society" (p. 2).

Their theory of HRD is based on three main ideas. A sociological framework is used to comprehend HRD, and 2) political, economic, and sociocultural perspectives are used to analyze HRD; and 3) HRD is founded on education. HRD is defined as "organized learning experiences provided by employers within a specific period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth" by Nadler (1970) (cited in Nadler & Nadler 1989, p. 4). Nadler's definition was more segment-specific. HRD is defined as an organizational procedure that can promote both personal development and increased productivity. McLagan (1989) defined HRD as a cohesive collection of functions, in contrast to Nadler & Nadler (1989) who defined HRD as a process. HRD, according to her, is the "integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness" (p. 53). According to McLagan, the primary procedure that distinguishes HRD duties from other HR-related activities is development. Swanson (2001) defines HRD as a method that assists individuals in achieving predefined goals for organizational performance through training and organization development. Increasing performance is its primary goal.

When discussing HRD as a multi-functional entity, the organizational environment is not included in any of the three definitions of HRD (McLagan, 1989; Nadler & Nadler, 1989; Swanson, 2001). There have been several assertions (Garavan, McGuire and O'Donnell, 2004; Kuchinke, 2001; McLean & McLean, 2001) that HRD ought to be taken into consideration outside of an organizational framework. According to McLean & McLean (2001), the field's potential for progress hinges on how broadly we can characterize it. Kuchinke (2001) asserts that a more thorough HRD paradigm is needed. It is stated on page 435 of Garavan et al. (2004)'s report that HRD need to be "considered multidisciplinary, multiperspectival, and multilevel". To take into account HRD at the individual, organizational, and community-societal levels, a multilayer approach would be employed. This method becomes increasingly pertinent as scholars attempt to comprehend how HRD is seen and applied in various nations or cultures worldwide. Since the goal of our research is to understand HRD policies, practices, and activities in certain countries throughout the world, a comprehensive definition of HRD that takes into consideration organizational, national, and social settings was necessary. The definition provided by McLean and McLean (2001) satisfies this need. Human resource development, or HRD, is a tactic or action that "has the potential, either initially or over time, to develop adults' workplace knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or ultimately the whole of humanity" (p. 322). The word includes federal, state, and local initiatives as well as national policies and practices that affect people's development. They address fundamental developmental issues

involving "health, culture, community, safety, and a host of other considerations...", which are not included by conventional definitions of HRD, according to McLean (2004), p. 270. Based on input from academics and professionals worldwide, this concept has gained widespread recognition (McLean & McLean, 2001; Hasler, Thompson & Schuler, 2006; Ke, Chermack, Lee & Lin, 2006; Rangel, 2004; Yang, Zhang & Zhang, 2004).

An original categorization of international HRD research is provided by Metcalfe and Reese (2005). They assert that international HRD study may be categorized into three areas: "global HRD, comparative HRD, and national HRD" (p. 449), based on an economics and development sociology approach. A few of the policies and initiatives that fall under the wide heading of global HRD include "international management and development, international HRD policy, including cross-cultural training, competency development, and international organization development" (p. 456). In 2003, Hansen conducted research on the "cross-cultural transferability of occupational assumptions, in the form of work myths, to a foreign setting" (p. 16). In this case, the HRD models were American, the international settings were Ivory Coast and German organizations. Her investigation showed that country differences were reflected in labor misconceptions. The primary goal of comparative human resource development (HRD) is "evaluation of different countries' HRD systems, including education and vocation systems, institutional analysis, and cultural analyses" (Metcalfe & Reese, 2005, p. 456). This method may be used to compare any two systems, including the HRD systems of two different countries or even two divisions within a business or organization.

When Kuchinke (2003) compared the national systems (of higher education) in the US and the UK, she discovered that the US had a decentralized system with no national-level coordination for certifications and accreditations, whereas the UK had a central system of HRD accreditation and certification that was closely linked to the national system of education (p. 296). On page 456 of Metcalfe and Reese's 2005 publication, national HRD is concentrated on "government skill formation and employment policy (HRD), institutional development, and partnership development with international agencies." Studies led by McLean (2006) have employed the three-dimensional (economic, political, and social) framework created by Harbison and Myers (1964) to examine the impact of HRD in different countries. (Ke, Chermack, Lee & Lin, 2006; Paprock, Yumol & Atienza, 2006; Cunningham, Lynham & Weatherly, 2006; Hasler, Thompson & Schuler, 2006). These studies demonstrate the important influence national education policies have on the overall development of the country. National educational policies and the expansion of a country's human resource base are closely correlated, according to research from China, Kenya, India, the Philippines, and the UK (Ke, Chermack, Lee & Lin, 2006; Lee, 2004; Lutta-Mukhebi, 2004; Paprock, Yumol & Atienza, 2006; Rao, 2004). This bolsters the idea advanced by Harbison and Myers (1964) that educational success serves as the cornerstone of human resource development. Ke, Chermack, Lee, and Lin (2006), for instance, list the several social and economic elements that affect HRD laws in China. It was found that the Philippines' unstable economy was one of the main issues it was dealing with (Paprock, Yumol & Atienza, 2006). Cunningham, Lynham, and Weatherly (2006) found twelve traits that might help or hurt NHRD programs' ability to be implemented successfully in South Africa. These tactics centered on the nation's political, social, economic, and educational structures.

HRD demands a global perspective on fundamental developmental issues. The United States has eight main aims for the international development of states, which are outlined by McLean (2006). Creating international development cooperation, combating HIV/AIDS and other illnesses, and achieving universal primary education are a few of these objectives. A nation's HRD policy is directly impacted by a wide range of elements.

The investigation and analysis of NHRD practices and policies, as well as their effects on human resources in the selected countries, are based in part on some of these developmental traits.

METHODOLOGY

The authors examined and evaluated the corpus of recently published works in order to address the study proposals. Data from government electronic databases and, in the case of Italy, information from practitioners in the field were used in the lack of literature. The Human Resource Development Quarterly, Human Resource Development International, Advances in Developing Human Resources, Human Resource Development Review, and the International Journal of Training and Development were among the journals we excluded from our search that were released within the previous five years, from 2002 to 2006. The search was conducted using EBSCO, ABI-Inform, and a few other search engines that were supported by the organization. The search was limited to HRD-related research that focused on national HRD studies and practices unique to each country. For example, since training and development is a role related to HRD in several countries, we included studies on this topic. One of the study's shortcomings was its heavy dependence on previously published works and the paucity of first-hand field data. The interviews were also conducted online via emails. Because most of us were dispersed, emails were our main form of communication, which made conversations a little more difficult. The findings of the analysis of the collected data are provided in the section that follows.

FINDINGS

We would want to clarify terminology like "developing country" and "developed country," which are frequently used to refer to the countries that are the focus of the study, before presenting the findings. A useful paradigm for categorizing a nation as developed, developing, or undeveloped is the Human Development Index (HDI) (Wikipedia, 2006). The HDI is a "standard measure of overall wellbeing," according to Wikipedia's second paragraph, which also states that it is "used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, developing, or underdeveloped country, and is also used to measure the impact of economic policies on quality of life." It covers social and economic dimensions including life expectancy, literacy, education, and living conditions. It was assembled by the United Nations Development Program. Understanding the social, educational, and economic development variables that the HDI measures is necessary for understanding national HRD policies and practices (McLean, 2006). The HDI study divides countries into three development categories: high, medium, and poor. According to this definition, the developed world has a high HDI score, the developing world has a medium score, and the underdeveloped world has a low score.. Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Cameroun, Mali, and Niger are classified as developing states according to HDI statistics gathered in 2004 (Human

Development Report, 2006 as mentioned in Wikipedia). The findings are grouped under four major headings to help comprehend what HRD is, how it's applied, and the problems and obstacles that it faces.

Clarity of HRD Concept/Definition

Human resource development (HRD) seems to be defined more explicitly in wealthy countries than in developing ones. This might be a result of the concept being explored here. However, our study demonstrates that HRD has been practiced in numerous countries, albeit with varying interpretations of the word. Furthermore, it seemed that HRD and HR were used interchangeably outside of the US. It was also critical to note the fundamental differences between industrialized and developing countries. For example, there is disagreement among scholars and industry professionals on what exactly constitutes human resource development (HRD), even though both Nigeria and Ghana are prosperous West African nations. In West Africa and other developing countries, there has been less focus on human resource development (HRD) and investments in human capital (Obinna & Ekweozor, 2024). Both Togo and the Gambia appear to be seeing the similar pattern. In the State of Nigeria, human resource development (HRD) is seen as a process that gives workers the ability to create and carry out organizational and governmental goals and objectives in a practical and effective way. A single HRD paradigm is hard to come by in Ghana (Obinna & Chinda, 2022). On the other hand, education and training are perceived as continuous, all-encompassing processes that include the reinforcement of traditional knowledge and African social, cultural, and spiritual values in addition to the transfer of new information and skills (Obinna, 2023).

With the expansion of their economies, rising nations' definitions and concepts of HRD are constantly evolving. The website of the Brazilian Ministry of Work and Employment has information about a national HRD strategy called the "National Policy of Professional Qualification". Twenty years after the People's Republic of China was established, the country has made progress in the development of its national HR initiatives (Yang, Zhang & Zhang, 2004). In terms of HRD at the organizational level, China is currently transitioning from a personnel system to a Westernized HRD system, and HR, HRD, and personnel are still combined (McLean, 2001).

Purpose of National HRD

In economically and socially developed countries like Nigeria, where statistics show that 99% of the work force is literate, education is no longer the main objective of HRD. In contrast, nations like Ghana and Liberia that are purely developed economically employ HRD to establish and implement organizational and governmental goals and objectives. The NHRD policy in that country is referred to as Nigerianization. Half of Nigeria's work force is to be nationalized as part of the Nigerianization process. NHRD policies in Nigeria prioritize education more than those in Ghana, where literacy is no longer a problem. In underdeveloped countries, HRD is primarily focused on the national level, with policies aimed at promoting educational growth. Because of NHRD initiatives like the National Education Policy (1986) and the Program of Action (1992), 95%

of Nigerians are enrolled in primary school. By 2000, there were 839, 000 primary schools in Nigeria. Ghana has a vast pool of human resources, but it lacks high-level experts (Ke, Chermack, Lee & Lin, 2006). Therefore, "in Ghana, increasing the level of education across the board and developing more highly skilled human resources are the top HRD priorities." The focus of HRD in Liberia has shifted from education to training, particularly vocational training. The Ministry of Work and Employment in Liberia is in charge of this project. The government is the primary body in Ghana and Nigeria that is in charge of creating and implementing HRD policies. Here, however, education rather than training is the main focus of HRD.

Practices

According to research, industrialized nations have considerably more varied HRD procedures with a variety of focuses to meet various demands for national progress. According to the Mali Institute of Labor, there were 66.4 million workers in Mali in 2005, with 67.6% of them working in the services sector, 27.8% in industry, and 4.6% in agriculture. Mali, a poor nation in West Africa, has stepped up its spending in HRD, education, and training in response to the difficulties posed by globalization. HRD in Ghana is focused on education, job training, and vocational training in the areas of leadership, organizational development, organizational theory, strategy, and culture, according to a paper from a Ghanaian government agency.

The State of Ghana met its NHRD objective through education and training. specifically, the academic city in Ghana, the governmental sponsorship program, and the education reform initiatives. Sociocultural constraints account for the unequal expansion of HRD in Niger throughout various areas (Personal Communication from a practitioner in the field, 2006). For example, the southern region of Niger has few restrictions concerning human resource development due to cultural values. In contrast, the highly industrialized area of northern Italy has implemented policies targeted at developing HRD theory and practice. Large, multinational corporations with a global presence and set of business procedures are largely responsible for the origins of HRD. Given that there are relatively less multinational firms in the northern than in the southern parts of Niger, HRD seems to be more prevalent in the north. In developing countries like those in West Africa, the majority of HRD practices are governed by the government. In Togo and Nigeria, the word HRD is used by government agencies, educational institutions, and private businesses to describe a wide range of programs and activities. The HRD category of activities includes teamwork, innovation, training and development, management development, and/or change. In Nigeria, actions related to organization development and training are referred to as "human resource development" (HRD) in corporate contexts, while education is referred to when discussing government organizations. The only areas of interest for the Ministry of Employment, a Rivers State government body in charge of overseeing and carrying out NHRD policy, are work and education. The offices of the Head of Service and Ministries conduct the majority of training around the country.

Major Challenges

Organizations concentrate too much on training, thus governments in poor nations have to support and give HRD more consideration. In the past, HRD training programs inside businesses have often been more specialized, whereas higher education in Mali has always been more centralistic. Developing nations like Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Togo, Niger, and Cameroun all have concerns about aging and growing unemployment rates (Obinna, 2023). Mali must contend with the unequal distribution of employment training possibilities across businesses catering to various age groups and industry sectors. Less training is provided to individuals under 34 and beyond 45 compared to those between 35 and 44 (Obinna & Chinda, 2022). The highest job training implementation rates are found in the service sector, specifically in real estate, insurance, and finance, at 94%; other industries with higher implementation rates are transportation and communication, at 51% (Obinna & Chinda, 2022, JIL, 2003a; Zhu, 2004). Apart from the above-mentioned challenges, human resource development endeavors often face hindrances in socially developing countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Niger. In Niger, poverty, unemployment, and sustainable development rates must all decline in order to maintain social stability. Human resource development is one tactic to improve these conditions (Obinna & Ekweozor, 2024, McLean, 2004). By encouraging information sharing and skill development via vocational training, HRD may help close knowledge gaps that are opening up and lessen the effects of unemployment and poverty in Liberia. The goal for Mali's training-related HRD investment is around 6% of GNP; however, the absence of national social programs has made this difficult to achieve. Another impediment to HR's growth is Mali's attitude on social discourse. Malians are perceived as gregarious individuals, despite their seldom discussion of societal topics. Collaboration between business and academic groups will be the most effective way to advance HRD in Mali. . Less than five colleges provide HR-related programs or classes, and the bulk of them are non-Malian institutions running study abroad initiatives.

The difficulties that emerging countries confront are very different from those that developed countries encounter. These countries often have a pressing need to improve their educational standards. Population growth affects economies and human resources in both positive and bad ways. Large labor forces are advantageous for human resource volume, but if the bulk of the population lacks skills or is illiterate, they also necessitate financial investment in education and training. When it comes to human resource development, China and India, the two countries with the largest populations in the world, are facing comparable challenges. Nigeria faces challenges in managing not just its massive population but also its diverse population, which encompasses individuals from various linguistic, religious, and ethnic origins. Nigeria is home to seven distinct religions and has three official languages. Given Nigeria's size and variety, what does human resource development actually entail in this country? Many individuals still do not have access to high school or higher education, even in spite of significant improvements in basic literacy and primary education (Obinna, 2023, Rao, 2004). Obinna (2023) contends that Nigeria's policy makers should tackle significant developmental challenges including poverty reduction and basic infrastructure in addition to directly supporting education. Similar to this, Ghana faces challenges from a lack of educated people, delayed educational advancement, and inadequate capital investment in the training and development of its labor force, despite achieving

exceptional economic success. (Obinna & Jaja, 2023, Ke, Chermack, Lee & Lin, 2006). It would be interesting to find out how these nations resolve these issues going forward.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following our examination of the literature and collection of information on the seven nations we had selected, we found the following: The terms "career development," "organizational development," and "training and development" are defined more precisely in developed countries. 2) While rising nations stressed social development and education, developed nations—both East and West—placed greater focus on organizational-related activities and training. 3) The government played a major role in creating and implementing HRD policy, focusing mostly on education in developing countries. 4) It's challenging to discern between HR, HRM, and HRD in the countries we examined. The following is a list of suggestions and areas that we believe should be major areas of HRD research focus:

The effect of national HRD: To investigate how governments in western countries carry out HRD policy. The role that the government and other organizations play in training and developing the vast workforces of emerging nations.

UN Millennium Goals: As recommended by McLean (2006), investigate whether nations are implementing some of the UN's stated goals (see to McLean, 2006), such as combating HIV/AIDS and ending extreme poverty. If so, how far along are they in realizing them?

NHRD Models: to keep developing the theoretical frameworks that are now used to analyze HRD in international contexts. Implications for HRD Theory, Practice and Research

A multitude of scholars have emphasized the need of an interdisciplinary approach to HRD research and the ramifications of examining HRD policies and procedures in other countries (Garavan, McGuire and O'Donnell, 2004; Duchene, 2001; McLean & McLean, 2001). Despite the advent of such a holistic approach, we still do not know how HRD practices and policies influence the great majority of countries in Asia, Africa, and South America. Despite the fact that the "developed west" only makes up a small percentage of all "Human Resources," we have been addressing HRD from a "western" standpoint. McLean (2004) recommended that HRD "focus its research and pay more attention to larger issues that affect whole countries." (p. 391), is extremely pertinent and emphasizes how critical it is to broaden the definition of HRD to encompass behaviors and policies that affect the entire country. A modest but significant contribution to this endeavor has been made by this work. The findings of this study provide more evidence that human resource development has expanded to include basic education, infrastructure development, and human welfare in addition to training, business, and performance.

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