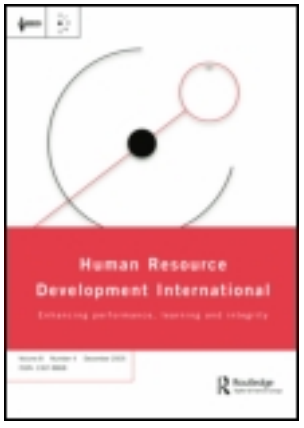

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Human resource development and sustainability: beyond sustainable organizations

Ellen Scully-Russ [a]

[a] Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University, 44983 Knoll Square, Suite 147, Ashburn, VA, 2014, USA

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Human resource development and sustainability: beyond sustainable organizations

Ellen Scully-Russ*

Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University, 44983 Knoll Square, Suite 147, Ashburn, VA 2014, USA

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This conceptual paper draws upon the theory of the risk society to develop three propositions that argue that Human resource development (HRD) and sustainability lie in a mutually co-constructive relationship. While many have critiqued HRD for its scant attention to sustainably, this paper identifies how three models of HRD including strategic HRD, critical HRD, and holistic HRD currently respond to the ideologies that vie to define the sustainability project. It is argued here that if HRD scholars and practitioners are more deliberate in their relationship with sustainability, they will encounter new and powerful conceptual and ethical frameworks to address the long standing tension in the field. As HRD grapples with sustainability they will need to address its own developmental dilemmas, which may give rise to a new HRD; one that is more aligned with the dilemmas of today's complex, global society.

Keywords: sustainability; sustainable organization; human resource development

Introduction

> Ecological problems disclose just how far modern civilization has come to rely on the expansion of control, and on economic progress as a means of repressing basic existential dilemmas of life. Anthony Giddens (1994)

This paper explores the ideology of sustainability and its implications for whether and how human resource development (HRD) responds to the dilemmas that comprise the sustainability project. Sustainability is a broad and undefined concept that attempts to integrate a myriad of environmental, human, social and political–economic dilemmas into a coherent analysis of the 21st century, global society and political-economy. The paper draws on the theory of the risk society (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991) to advance the idea that sustainability is a deep critique of the underlying precepts of modern society. The theory holds that mounting risk in the world will cause people deeply question the precepts of modern society and transform the framework of values and mental models they use to make sense of their world.

*Email: scullyru@gwu.edu

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Another term for this sense-making framework is ideology (Giroux 2011). Swanson and Holton (2001) implied the importance of ideology when they stressed the significance of mental models to HRD practise. Specifically, mental models help HRD practitioners navigate the practise challenges they face in organizations. Practitioners, they argue, must understand their models and be aware of how their models shape practise (Swanson and Holton 2001). Sustainability also requires us to examine our values and models, but so that we will realize their unintended consequences and create room for new and more sustainable frameworks to emerge.

Sustainability's critique strikes deep into the logic of modernity. Modern rationality and its value of unconstrained growth is accused of a host of unintended consequences that threaten the political, social and environmental ecology of the world (Giddens 1994; Korten 2010; Schumacher 1973). The sustainability literature is chockfull of calls for developmental change in the modern mode of production. The only path to a more sustainable future is for people around the world to develop a new consciousness, with new values and a new epistemology. This consciousness has been described as an eco-consciousness (O'Sullivan and Taylor 2004).

In eco-consciousness, human learning and development becomes the highest goal of productive human activity, while all other social and economic concerns are subordinated to it (Schumacher 1973). This consciousness has profound implication for the way we think about and behave in the market-based organizations that form the base of the world's industrial mode of production. Human resource development is aligned with the needs and interests of these organizations, so HRD scholars and practitioners understand the real world pressures that confront and defy the sustainability agenda. Human resource development has long debated many of the questions that now take on new meaning in the ideology of sustainability. For example, sustainability asks us to consider the purpose of economic and human activity (Schumacher 1973) and the human and social consequences for mobilizing human potential in support of the goals of market-driven organizations (Korten 2010). Human resource development scholars (Fenwick 2005; Kuchinke 2010) have raised many similar questions about HRD's role and responsibly in society.

Therefore, the sustainability project offers the field of HRD a historic opportunity for reflection and learning. If HRD responds to this opportunity, it must also confront the long standing dilemma in HRD related to its dual mission to foster, develop, and unleash human potential to improve organizational performance (Swanson and Holton 2001; Yorks 2005). This debate is not about HRD's dual mission, per se, rather it is about the ends to which this mission is pursued (Bierema 2009). The ideology of sustainability may provide HRD with new conceptual and ethical frameworks to draw upon as it engages in this old debate as well as new imperatives to resolve its developmental tensions in ways that may lead to new, more sustainable organizations and modes of thought.

Because scholars have criticized HRD for its' scant attention to sustainability (Bierema 2009; Fenwick and Bierema 2008), some will challenge the assertion that HRD and sustainability *may be* mutually constructive. If HRD does not respond to sustainability, then how can the two influence each other? However, it is argued here that HRD, by virtue of its role in organizations and its participation in the broader field of organizational studies, does respond to all ideologies that vie to direct organizational values and practises, including sustainability. So, HRD does engage sustainability to the extent that it seeks to influence the values and mental models

that people in organizations use to make sense of their experiences, regardless of whether individual practitioners perceive that their work is directly related to sustainability or not.

In addition, this paper may lead some to ask . . . : *What can or should we actually do?* Ideology is an abstract concept that raises metaphysical and ethical concerns that are best addressed by individuals as they make difficult choices in the context of daily practise. So it is difficult, and perhaps unwise to suggest a series of hard action imperatives to resolve the dilemmas discussed here. In this light, the author shares Schumacher's (1973) response to the legitimate question of the implications for HRD practise . . .

> The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work [sustainability] cannot be found in science or technology, the value of which utterly depends upon the ends they serve . . .

What follows is a modest attempt to bridge the sustainability and HRD literatures in order to shed more light on the role of ideology in sustainability and the implications for whether and how HRD responds. Given this potential link between sustainability and HRD, this paper makes three arguments. First, it argues that sustainability may represent or make visible a process of historic social change in which human development is placed above all other priorities in society. Secondly, if sustainability is a historic development process that emphasizes human development, then HRD, albeit a different HRD may become the very process by which this historic change occurs. In other words, there is *potential* for sustainability and HRD to become mutually constructive. Finally, the likelihood of a potential co-constructive relationship will be enhanced if HRD adopts an interpretive mode of thought (Korte 2012) that critically examines the precepts and processes that make a material difference for how people construct and experience organizational life (Chia 1995). The significance of these arguments for HRD scholarship and practise is also discussed.

Sustainability as human development

The world has seen an eight-fold increase in human economic activity since 1950 (Sachs 2008). This exponential growth has depleted natural resources, harmed the environment, fostered human displacement and torn the social fabric of nations and communities throughout the world (Bauman 2000; Korten 2001). These consequences of rapid economic expansion have given rise to new questions about the modern value for growth and the underlying belief in the human and social benefits of improved economic and organizational performance (Daly and Cobb 1994; Sachs 2008; Stead and Stead 2009). Indeed, the recent calls for more attention to the human factor in the sustainability agenda (Pfeffer 2010; Speth 2010) may represent a growing recognition of the human and social consequences of global economic development.

While the need for more sustainable production and consumption patterns have been the subject of public policy debate and scientific research throughout the last quarter of the 20th century (Schumacher 1973; Speth 2010), recent social, political and economic trends now push political–economic institutions to respond in concrete ways to the myriad of challenges under the umbrella of sustainability

(Speth 2010). However, there is little consensus over the definition of sustainability (Garavan and McGuire 2010). Instead, there are general agreements about the demands placed on organizations that seek to become more sustainable. Sustainability challenges prevailing values, mental models, and practises because it requires leaders to consider multiple stakeholders (Savitz and Weber 2006) as well as potential long-term consequences when making business decisions and strategies (Garavan and McGuire 2010).

Because sustainability requires deep and systemic change in organizations, it may trigger HRD's historic mission to unleash human potential to improve organizational problem solving and performance (Swanson and Holton 2001). Yet, it is important that HRD first reflect on and challenge its own mental models to ensure theories and practises are aligned with developmental demands and dilemmas of the sustainability project.

The risk society (Bauman 2000; Beck 1992; Giddens 1991) is a sociological discourse that informs the sustainability project. Its' basic premise is that a new form of reflective practise, called reflexivity has emerged in society as a response to the mounting risks that are associated with the core dilemmas that threaten the environment and the world order. Reflexivity is surfacing deep contradictions in the logic and values of modern, industrial society, and it holds great potential for deep structural change in society. This reflexive praxis has implications for HRD and its role in sustainability.

The risk society

In 1973, Schumacher (1973) called into question the prevailing modern belief in the natural goodness of continuous growth and development, a belief that is also accepted by HRD.

> . . . the changes in the last twenty-five years, both in quantity and in the quality of man's industrial processes, have produced an entirely new situation – a situation resulting not from our failures, but from what we thought were our successes that we hardly noticed the fact that we were rapidly using up a certain kind of irreplaceable capital asset, namely the tolerance margins which benign nature always produces (p. 19).

Twenty years later, Giddens (1994) made a similar observation when he remarked that '. . . [W]hat was supposed to create greater . . . certainty – the advance of human knowledge and controlled intervention into society and nature – is actually deeply involved with this unpredictability' (3). The uncertainties of which Giddens (1994) spoke are 'manufactured uncertainties' (4), or the unintended results of intentional human activity. Our modes of production and lifestyles have resulted in mounting risk and uncertainty in the world.

As risk continues to mount, it disrupts the flow of everyday life and people feel threatened and confused. Inevitably, people look to social institutions to restore order in their lives. These institutions respond by bringing their traditions and/or their deep value for scientific rationality and predictive control to solve problems to secure order in society (Schumacher 1973). Yet, the problems persist because the core dilemmas of the risk society are not problems of order; they are problems of risk (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994). Problems of risk have no certain solution because they are ambiguous. They cannot be resolved by way of predictive analysis for 'probabilities rule out nothing' (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, 9).

There are several reasons why predictive analysis does not mitigate risk problems. Risk and threats are subjective concerns and predictive analysis cannot account for these (Korte 2012). Subjectivity implies moral choices and raises power issues that go undetected or are silenced in the rationality of predictive science (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Giddens 1994; O'Sullivan and Taylor 2004). In addition, risk necessitates active engagement and choice within the context of daily life, yet rationality seeks causes and often results in prescriptions of what not to do. Soon 'avoidance imperatives dominate' (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, 9) society and people become incapable of coherent action.

Thus, the inability of rationality and control to restore order brings more, not less uncertainty, and soon risk and ambiguity come to characterize life in late modern society. Modern society is led to confront its self-image as a rational society based on science and technology (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994). People may experience a break in the internal logic of modernity and seek alternative modes to make sense of their experiences. This is why Schumacher said that risk problems '. . . strain man to a level above himself' (Schumacher 1973, 103). Such problems must be lived and they require a different, interpretive mode of thought than the mode that created them (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Schumacher 1973).

A deep critique emerges from within the very institutions that uphold the modern social order (Bauman 2000). The critique is wide-spread for it is focused not only on institutional priorities and strategies, but it also examines deep-seated ethical and legal principles upon which these institutions were formed and are sustained (Giddens 1994). All natural givens in life are deconstructed and people come to see that mounting risk is a natural outcome and an essential component of the industrial mode of production (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994).

At this point, people have developed the capacity to critically reflect upon the social conditions and consequences of their own modes of existence (Anderson 2010). Giddens (1994) calls this reflection, reflexive modernization because people question their basic conditions of action and they begin to make structural changes in the institutions that comprise everyday life. As institutions shift, the nature of everyday life and its modes of values and thought also change. In other words, social change occurs from within social institutions, including private firms that organize work and make up the political economy. People's choices and actions set the stage for developmental change in society (Giddens 1994).

Giddens (1994) raises an essential, if not an existential, question that must be answered when people realize that ambiguity is integral to modern life. The question is whether people will continue to seek to control the disorder in the risk society through rationality and predictive measures, or will they embrace ambiguity and develop new values and new ways of thinking and acting that are more aligned with the demands of late modernity?

The sustainability project raises the very same question. Indeed, sustainability may be an ideology that has emerged to influence how we understand and respond to the new levels of risk and ambiguity today. A review of the sustainability literature reveals tensions related to Gidden's existential question. Indeed, the literature on sustainability shows that sustainability is itself comprised of several different frameworks of values and mental models that compete to define what it is, why it is important, and how it may be realized.

Ideology of sustainability and HRD

Table 1 identifies three frameworks that may vie for dominance in shaping the ideology of sustainability, including: ecological modernism, sustainable development and new environmentalism. The table also shows three different models of HRD theories and practises, strategic HRD, critical HRD and holistic HRD, that correspond with the underlying precepts of these frameworks. In addition, the table provides concrete examples of how HRD is operationalized in each of these models. These concrete models show how the ideology of sustainability has a material effect on HRD.

Eco-modernism and strategic HRD

Daniels (2005) explained eco-modernism as a policy framework that inspires a less material and energy-intensive economy. New economic policies provide market incentives for the development and diffusion of new technologies and production and consumption patterns that minimize the material and energy requirements of global economic progress. Its logic rests on a modern value for distributive justice (Schumacher 1973), achieved through a free-market economy and a deep faith in the ability of scientific progress to solve problems, grow markets and promote social welfare. For this model to work, all nations must adopt similar policies, social standards and technology.

Though some critique the feasibility of this large-scale adoption, Sachs (2008) argued that the economic model is sound. The problem is that the world's antiquated political–economic structures limit the deep collaboration required to make the model work on a global scale. He advocated for a new world order to leverage scientific progress and help nations adopt culturally appropriate and environmentally sensitive economic growth models. Included in this framework are a set of market incentives to modify lifestyles and consumption patterns and to coordinate the economic activities of the growing number of suppliers and consumers around the world. The aim is to conserve, protect, and regenerate environmental resources. New global structures and regulation to mitigate destructive industrial practises and new investments in human development and social welfare ensure equity and uphold a more collaborative global political–economic system (Sachs 2008). Clearly, this agenda requires an institutional framework that can generate and leverage the science, technology and knowledge to effectively manage a complex, global political-economy.

Strategic HRD

Human resource development scholars rate globalization as an issue of great importance for HRD (Marquardt and Berger 2003), and they have taken up challenges related to its implications for human learning and firm performance. Firms require access to workers throughout the world with strong expertise and the capacity to learn. Human resource development is called upon to take new strategic roles so it can '... develop complex business systems to manage business units located in diverse cultural environments in a cost-effective and efficient manner' (McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell 2005, 133). Strategic HRD (SHRD) provides HRD with the science and technology to take on this new strategic role.

Table 1. Sustainability frameworks and corresponding HRD models.

	Sustainability framework	HRD model	Critique
Eco-modernism/ Strategic HRD/ Talent management (TM)	1) Framework of values and mental models to stimulate carbon-neutral economy and less material lifestyles 2) Predicated on logic of modernity: free-market ideology and faith in rationality of science and technology 3) Seeks a global political-economic framework based on democracy in which all nations adopt minimum environmental and social standard that ensure for the equitable distribution of wealth and risk across the world	1) Proactive, system-wide intervention that supports corporate strategy and continuous change in firms 2) Aims to foster learning culture and convert core competencies into competitive advantage 3) Strategic HRD and firm strategy lie in mutually constructive relationship- SHRD creates conditions for firms to achieve strategic objectives, and SHRD becomes integral to firm's performance 4) TM: segments the workforce to identify pivotal talent pools and applies logic of supply chain management to design recruitment and development processes to build pipelines to workers with strategic skills and competencies	1) De-contextualized and disembodied view of skill and knowledge 2) Overemphasis on and alignment with management's performance agenda 3) Ignores HRD's responsibility to the individuals who do fit into the pivotal talent pools
Sustainable development/ Critical HRD/ Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	1) Based on deep critique of the technical optimism of modernism and its free market ideology 2) Involves new ownership models which organize new social institutions that are anchored in and accountable to the community	1) Examines power relationships and how they condition people to regulate themselves in service to corporate goals 2) Seeks to restore the central role of the person in organizations, which in turn helps create a more humane workplace	1) Marginalized status raises questions whether CHRD can take a strong hold in organizations and make a difference in political economy of firms 2) Questions related to its base in critical theory, which is a theory that may be losing its explanatory potential in new

(*continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

	Sustainability framework	HRD model	Critique
	3) Transforms capital from private wealth to a community resource that can be used to end poverty and protect/preserve the environment	3) Instils a value and capacity for critical reflection to help people question their assumptions about the nature of work and quality and structure of their relationships 4) CSR: loosely coupled global network that shares a common agenda to make capital more accountable to society; instils new framework of values and mental models in corporations	historical circumstances of the risk society
Eco-consciousness/ Holistic HRD	1) A social structure, ontology, and epistemology that makes an interdependent, eco-consciousness a material reality 2) Seeks to restore a robust biodiversity 3) Embraces humanity's learning nature to create new, more sustainable conditions for the future development of life on the planet	1) Seeks to develop new understanding of what it means to be human and how humans develop in new global society 2) Holistic HRD is emerging alongside the new global order 3) Local expressions of HHRD emerge in which people create conditions of their own development 4) Local expressions confronted by demands of globalised society 5) Holistic HRD navigates this tense relationship to authentically integrate to local and influence more accommodating shifts in the global 6) Contours of HHRD emerge through this process	1) Questions related to its roots in humanism, which cannot acknowledge or respond to the brutality of global corporate environment

While traditional HRD employs training and development interventions to solve specific operational problems, SHRD is a proactive, system-wide intervention that supports corporate strategy and continuous change (McCracken and Wallace 2000). Corporate strategy and SHRD reside in a mutually constructive relationship (McCracken and Wallace 2000). Strategic HRD provides HRD strategies that both respond to and help shape corporate strategy and these strategies create new capacity for the firm to achieve its strategic objectives (Garavan 2007). A new learning culture emerges and SHRD's practises are enhanced and grow more integral to the firm's strategy and performance (Garavan 2007; McCracken and Wallace 2000). Human resource development may integrate into a wider package of Human Resource Management activities, which enhances its stature and its impact on firm performance (McCracken and Wallace 2000).

Talent management has emerged as a conceptual framework to help guide the innovation required for SHRD (Cappelli 2008; Boudreau and Ramstad 2005). This model draws upon the logic of marketing and logistics to enhance SHRD decisions (Boudreau and Ramstad 2005). Strategic HRD segments the workforce by identifying pivotal talent pools that contribute most to the firm's success. Once identified, HR/SHRD adopt the logic of supply chain management to design new recruitment and development processes that build effective and efficient pipelines for the skills and competencies that are critical to the firm's strategic objectives (Cappelli 2008; Lawler and Boudreau 2009).

This model is critiqued for its de-contextualized and disembodied view of skill and knowledge (Anderson 2010), and for its alignment with management's performance agenda (Bierema 2009). A major question which this model largely ignores is what is HRD's responsibility to the individuals who do fit into the pivotal talent pools?

Sustainable development and critical HRD

Sustainable development (Korten 2001, 2006, 2010; Schumacher 1973) is an alternative economic model for achieving sustainability. In sustainable development, new ownership models organize new social institutions that are anchored in and accountable to the community (Schumacher 1973; Korten 2001). This new political–economic framework transforms capital from private wealth to a community resource that is used to end poverty and protect the environment (Korten 2010). New policies and activities build the capacity of civic groups to reclaim their economic space (Korten 2010). Scientific and technological progress remain important in this model, but these processes are brought under the control of local institutions that give people a voice in processes that deeply affect their lives (Korten 2010; Schumacher 1973). As these local institutions grow and become more powerful, they gain leverage over global corporations and pressure them to adopt socially responsible values and practises (Korten 2001, 2010).

Sustainable development is based on critical theory, which is a deep criticism of eco-modernism (Trehan, Rigg, and Stewart 2006). The basic premise is that modernity forged a problematic alliance between capital, science, and technology and this alliance controls all human and social processes (Giroux 2011). This alliance dominates the lifeworld (Habermas 1981) or the everyday culture of society through the powerful modern institutions that socialize people. As people are socialized, the social order is imprinted onto the values and mental models that guide how they

make meaning of experience. Critical theory seeks to counter society's hold on people's ways of knowing and being. It does so by helping people deconstruct the internalized structure, connect to the lifeworld, and foster authentic forms of social engagement (Habermas 1981).

Critical HRD

Critical HRD (CHRD) takes up cause of the lifeworld in organizations. It examines power relationships and how they condition people to regulate themselves in service to the corporate goals (Trehan 2004). It seeks to restore the central role of person in practise and to create a more humane workplace (Turnbull and Elliott 2005). Critical HRD does this by instilling the capacity for critical reflection so that people question the deep assumptions that define their work and structure their relationships (Bierema 2009).

Critical HRD is distinguished from other forms of reflective HRD practise by its emphasis on the institutional, cultural–historic context of the workplace and the significance of this context for the immediate interactions and relationships in everyday work (Trehan, Rigg, and Stewart 2006). This surfaces contradictions, tensions and complexities embedded in the values and logic of the political-economy, which fosters learning and change in individuals and organizations (Sambrook 2009; Trehan, Rigg, and Stewart 2006). Thus, CHRD is a practise that views the workplace as a site of significant learning and social change (Trehan, Rigg, and Stewart 2006).

Fenwick and Bierema (2008) described corporate social responsibility (CSR) similarly to Korten's grassroots economic network. Corporate social responsibility is a loosely coupled global network of informal groups, social movements and institutional actors in the global political economy that share a common project to make capital more accountable to local communities (Fenwick and Bierema 2008). However, Fenwick and Bierema (2008) were surprised to find that HRD was not engaged in CSR initiatives. This finding is the reason some question whether CHRD can make a difference in political economy of firms and nations. This is perhaps why some scholars have turned the CHRD critique towards HRD to explore whether and how HRD has come to adopt the management's performance agenda in the first place (Sambrook 2009; Kuchinke 2007).

New environmentalism/eco-consciousness and holistic HRD

Goerner, Dyck, and Lagerroos (2008) described new environmentalism as a mindset that has evolved in response to the growing knowledge in the world. Globalization and new scientific discoveries challenge universal theories about nature, including human nature and reveal the destructive consequences of modern value for limitless growth. Some argue (Daloz 2004; Goerner, Dyck, and Lagerroos 2008) that this awareness may reflect new eco-consciousness, which reveals human nature as being deeply interconnected in the world. People and societies that adopt this logic may act more responsibly in the world (Giddens 1994; Schumacher 1973).

New environmentalism is based on the precept that humans create the conditions of their physical survival and cultural development (Goerner, Dyck, and Lagerroos 2008; Speth 2010; Stead and Stead 2009). Drawing on Lovelock's Gaia theory (Goerner, Dyck, and Lagerroos 2008; Stead and Stead 2009), it recognizes the co-evolutionary nature of the earth and all species. Each species and organism in the

system co-evolves through an ongoing process of cooperation and competition (Stead and Stead 2009). This process shapes the broader environment, or the biosphere that thrives on variety. The more organisms participating in biosphere, the more robust it becomes.

The realization that diminishing biodiversity may erode the earths' capacity to sustain human life (Stead and Stead 2009) has lead Daloz (2004) to call for a new eco-consciousness. In the consciousness, humans become aware of the intrinsic inter-dependent nature of biodiversity and learn that we are by our nature, interdependent. This new awareness calls for a new interdependent epistemology or a way of being in the world that can grasp the profoundly embedded nature of the human species. More than being connected to other entities or organisms in the world, humans are part of a dynamic, ever-changing relationship that constitutes and reconstitutes the world (Daloz 2004). We come to know the world and our place in it as we interact and engage.

This process is the same as Gidden's (1994) reflexive modernization because it serves to reconstitute the fragile social order. Thus, eco-consciousness is a human development process wherein people and social groups commit to their learning nature and use it to create new, sustainable conditions for the future development of the planet.

Holistic HRD

Lee (2007, 2010) argued that HRD is a development process that underlies globalization and the historic change that accompanies it. Globalization is changing the way people relate and engage in the world, and it is laying ground for the new conditions by which humans will learn and survive as individuals and a species. Lee (2007, 2010) called for a holistic HRD (HHRD) to co-create new perspectives of what it means to be human as well as new historic understandings for how and why humans develop.

There is no universal definition of HHRD, rather there are expressions embedded in local contexts where people create the conditions for their own development (Valentin 2006). Global development processes confront these local expressions and pressure people to respond in particular ways that may not match or acknowledge the indigenous knowledge and skill. Holistic HRD theory and practise emerge as HRD navigates the ambiguous relationships between the global and the local. This process is mutually constructive; it will help integrate the local expressions of HRD, while also shifting the broader ideologies to accommodate local needs. The contours of HHRD theory and practise will also emerge from this process. Thus, HHRD cannot be defined by scholarly debates; it is co-constructed in context of everyday life. In speaking to the field of HRD, Lee (2007) said that this process '... will affect our jobs and our morality' (106).

A critique of this model is directed at its humanist roots (McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell 2005). Humanism does not understand the brutality of corporations where there is little room for its vision of development through authentic relationships (McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell 2005).

Discussion

This review has shown that there is no one way to understand sustainability or HRD. What is clear is that the two share a common aim to foster productive

environments that create the conditions for the future development of people and society. The ideology of sustainability implores us to direct this mission to the core dilemmas of our time. Yet, Giddens' (1994) existential question remains unanswered. Will society, and more relevant to this discussion, HRD pursue this mission by seeking control-oriented solutions, or will it embrace ambiguity and modes of thought that are aligned with the demands of a world that has grown in risk and uncertainty?

The risk society posits that as risk problems mount they cause industrial society to critically examine and transform its self-image and social forms. Human resource development theories describe the developmental process on the individual level, Kegan's (1994) levels of consciousness; Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, for example. Giddens (1994) adds reflexive modernization to explain how under historic conditions of today individual development may result in social change. Risk leads to reflective modernization that directs individual learning towards an acceptance of mounting risks and ambiguity in society. People reflexively examine the conditions of their modes of existence (Anderson 2010), which change those conditions. Gradually, new conditions for action provoke new values and modes of thought that are developmentally different than the one underlying industrial society. A new consciousness emerges as people become aware and learn to navigate the new (dis)order of the risk society.

Daloz (2004), Goerner, Dyck, and Lagerroos (2008) and O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004) agree that the essence of this mode is its relational epistemology in which individuals and collectives come to know themselves and their world through intimate and dynamic interaction with all other species and entities on the planet. This dynamic demands people continuously re-organize and restructure their modes of thought in order to accommodate the paradox and complexity of an interdependent world. In other words, the only way to navigate the world is to continuously *develop* as individuals, which continuously reconstitutes society.

Proposition 1. The ideology of sustainability may represent or make visible a process of historic social change in which human development is placed above all other priorities.

If HRD theories and practise are to remain viable in this shifting context, HRD must redirect its aims towards helping organizations and people grapple with the core dilemmas of our time. Indeed, the context of turbulent change and risk mobilizes HRD's traditional role and responsibility for learning and development. The core dilemmas of today may require HRD to take up new values and modes of thought more aligned with the demands of an ambiguous world (Yorks and Nicolaides 2012). This review shows that HRD does respond to ideology of sustainability with several models, including models that are reflective (CHRD) and reflexive (HHDR). Reflexive HRD would cause people in organizations to reflect back on the conditions of their modes of thought and existence. In this approach, people in organizations would deeply probe and question the basic precepts of their theories and practises and re-constitute them to meet the new ethical and cognitive demands of the risk society. Indeed, if the field of HRD adopts ambiguous ways of knowing and being, the modes and conditions of HRD may change.

Proposition 2. There is *potential* for sustainability and HRD to become mutually constructive.

Many (Chia 1995; Kegan 1994; Korte 2012; Mezirow 1991; Raelin 2007; Yorks and Nicolaides 2012) have attempted to delineate a more ambiguous way of knowing and some (Chia 1995; Kegan 1994; Raelin 2007) ironically label it post-modern. Ironically, because a post-modern mode of thought would first and foremost defy any attempts to label it as such.

Modern, rational thinking requires conviction that things are indeed what we think they are. It therefore tends to view entities like organizations and the interests and people that comprise them as static objects in a state of rest (Chia 1995). This view ignores the complex historic and current day social processes that serve to constitute and recreate these organized states in the first place. Modern logic, among other things helps minimize the complexity of the relational dynamics that constitute daily life and makes life more manageable (Chia 1995), yet this logic is not amenable to problems of risk and ambiguity that now interrupt the flow of everyday life.

An alternative interpretive (Korte 2012) or processual (Chia 2003) mode of thought, on the other hand privileges the emergent and dynamic micro-social interactions (Korte 2012) or what Chia (1995) calls the patterning of micro-logics through which '... the affairs of the world are made more pliable, wielding and more amenable to human intervention and control' (599). Processual logic is concerned with understanding how reality emerges and the micro-processes that organize and sustain our experience of stability in our social environment (Chia 1995).

Thus, processual knowing underlies reflexivity for it deconstructs the taken for granted objects that make up the material world by asking what has made it so in the first place. This logic reveals the dynamics and patterns of interactions that hold an entity together so that it is experienced as material reality. It does this by attending to action, motivation, tensions and intentions of people as they engage in productive activity (Chia 1995). A focus on the micro-processes reveals the moral choices and power dynamics that go undetected or are silenced in the rationality of predictive science.

Korte (2012) asserts that if HRD attended to the micro-logic of organizing in organizations, it would allow us to notice the forces to which people respond, as well as how they make meaning of their experience. In other words, a processual, interpretive mode of thought might expose the ideology of sustainability (as well as other ideologies) and the ways in which HRD and other human practise respond.

Thus, this mindset is by its nature concerned with both development and sustainability. It is concerned with development because it seeks to understand the processes by which entities like people and their social surround are mutually constructed and changed. This focus on development is what makes it also concerned with 'sustainability' because it seeks to know how the social constructs are sustained and changed as such through the micro-interactions of everyday life. Here, sustainability may be seen as a solidified moment in the processes that today is organizing a new historic epoch of human development.

Proposition 3. The likelihood of a potential co-constructive relationship will be enhanced if HRD adopts an interpretive mode of thought (Korte 2012).

Conclusions and significance for HRD

The implications of this discussion for HRD are as wide as they are deep. Rather than list them here, the paper will close by drawing three conclusions that HRD

scholars and practitioners need to seriously consider. These conclusions relate to the reflexivity in late modern society and the precept that it causes the contexts for action, to include the political-economic organizations that concern HRD, to change from within (Giddens 1991). This model of social change and learning is quite different than the theories that HRD draws upon in its scholarship and practise. Current trends may call on HRD and other social-psychological fields to re-ground theories in lived experience (Chia 2005; Korte 2012).

Conclusion 1: There is need for a practise-based approach to organizational scholarship and practise. The practise-based approach recognizes and adopts a processual knowing in which people experience the world through the judgments that they make (Beckett 2008). As ambiguity mounts, people routinely face situations and challenges where rules and strategies do not apply (Marsick and Watkins 1999). Nevertheless, they must continue. In the face of uncertainty, people surface and articulate their intentions as well as the reasons why they chose particular strategies. In other words, they share and warrant their practise with others (Beckett 2001). As the community attends to each other's warrants, it develops new practise-based knowledge, which shifts its underlying theories and practise.

Daloz (2004) claimed such an approach requires a capacity to think dialogically and a high measure of confidence and maturity. One must be '... willing to listen attentively, take the perspective of the other imaginatively, and let go of one's own certainties, for a moment, without fearing that one will be swept up in the conviction of others...' (39). This form of inquiry is a core tenant of Mezirow's(1991) transformative learning theory, though it lacks the security of ideal speech conditions that Mezirow's (1991) dialogue is predicated upon. People must interact in this way because daily life demands they do so.

There is opportunity for HRD to become both the tool and result (Holzman 2006) of this practise-based approach. In articulated practise, HRD will surface and warrant the theories that drive its action and test them in the context of practise. This test may cause HRD to reorder the precepts that define what practitioners know and drive what they do. Emerging from this process may be a deeper understanding of how knowledge is created, recreated, and distributed in practise, which will make HRD more effective at fostering learning and development in others.

Conclusion 2: In a practise-based approach, the only way to know is to engage and become a part of the micro-interactions that constitute organizations and life today. Korte (2012) made a case for HRD to claim the micro level of analysis as its own and suggested it rebuild its theory and practise from this orientation. As the institutions that comprise modern life, including the political–economic institutions that are the object of HRD's theory and practise, continue to yield the developmental demands of reflexivity, HRD has the potential to help us understand the deeper processes and meanings that control the way we make sense in our lives. By claiming the micro-level of analysis, HRD can lead the way both conceptually and in the context of organizational life in developing the practise-based mindset that is more compatible with the core dilemmas of late modern life, which many link to the sustainability project.

Conclusion 3: HRD requires a metaphysical orientation that raises issues of power and ethical choices which HRD masks with predictive rationality at its peril. Sustainability is a paradox. It puts new demands on people that they cannot meet though the prevailing values and modes of modern life, yet it requires that people

also choose what they value and therefore want to protect from the sweeping forces of social change. Schumacher (1973) talked about the centre. For Schumacher (1973), the centre represents human intentionality to do 'good', but he also acknowledged that good is relevant – good for whom, he asked?

Reflective modernization shows that the choices we make in the micro-interactions of daily life are a matter of great consequence. Without moral and ethical direction, or a centre, people cannot regulate the myriad of impulses, urges, desires, and strivings in the micro-logic, which leave them feeling '... confused, contradictory, self-defeating, and possibly self-destructive' (Schumacher 1973, 100). People need to navigate the micro-logic so they can 'centre' themselves in the multicity of values and frameworks that are available to them for making sense in the world. Yet, at the same time, they need what Dewey (1938) called plasticity, which is the ability to alter their centre based on a reflexive examination of the conditions of action.

Human resource development requires a centre, as do individual scholars and practitioners. This centre cannot be prescribed – like in a code of ethics; rather it must emerge from lived experience of those who are concerned with HRD processes. Sustainability calls on HRD to engage in an articulated practise so to warrant its basic intentions and choices. This will help HRD to navigate the human complexity of its practise, not from a technical, how-to perspective, but from a values-based perspective.

Human resource development may become more aware of the ethical choices involved in every day practise and how these choices re-constitute the very organizations that it aims to serve. Sustainability calls on HRD to look beyond the narrow interests that serve to maintain the integrity of traditional organizations in order to expose turbulent dynamics and tough ethical choices that go unnoticed in the rational mindset that drive organizations as well as HRD theories and practise today.

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