

Delineating and Charting the Systematic Approach of HRD Process

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to delineate the systematic approach of HRD process. Specifically, the systematic process of 'why', 'how', 'where', and the 'when' of HRD will be deliberated. A review of the relevant literature was conducted both manually and through the computerised database. This paper presents a systematic process flow chart of each step in the HRD process. This review will contribute to the HRD literature in which the 'why', 'how', 'where' and the 'when' of the HRD process is charted and modelled.

Keywords: HRD, T&D, Systematic Approach, Needs Assessment, Design, Implement, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

By tradition, organisations use HRD programs and training activities to address employee development, work performance and productivity issues and problems. These HRD programs and interventions are conventionally applied to provide induction training of newly employed employees into the organizations, provide basic skills and knowledge, upgrading existing capabilities and help in effective teamworking. Hence, to warrant that these goals are achieved, a systematic approach to planning, designing, delivering and evaluating HRD programs is critical. However, these designing HRD programs and activities involve a process, which is known as the four step systematic approach, involving the needs assessment, design, implementation and evaluation (Desimone, Werner and Harris, 2002:23), and be easily remembered and referred as the 'why', 'how', 'where', and the 'when' of HRD. Therefore, this paper will delineate the four-phase process approach to describe HRD efforts, namely, needs assessment, design, implementation and evaluation.

THE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH IN HRD

In the traditional context, Wilson (1999) suggests that T&D have been primarily concerned with carrying out the identification of training needs, planning and designing training, implementing and evaluating training activities. This process is called the 'training cycle' as shown in Figure 1. However, as views on the conventional training cycle have been challenged with the systematic approach to T&D, a different typology emerged that encompass a process of similar nature to T&D with the inclusion of strategy and involving other stakeholders at various stages of the process (Harrison, 2000). Hence, in the case of HRD being strategic and systematic, it has its starting point in the identification of business objectives or strategies, which can be seen in Figure 1. This systematic approach differs from the traditional approach, as shown in Figure 2, with the identification of training needs being replaced by the identification of organisation's objectives or strategy (Winter, 1995). This description of the HRD process is simplified by Delahaye (2000) and Harrison (2000) that began with investigation, design and implementation, and end with evaluation in leading and managing organisational renewal for change management.

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Figure 1: The Classic Training Cycle (Wilson, 1999)

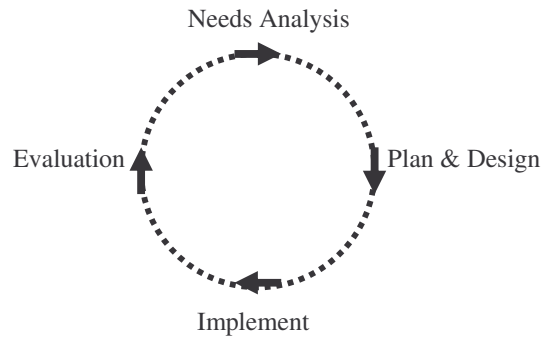


Figure 2: The HRD Integrating Model (Winter, 1995)



Needs Assessments and Analysis

The first stage in the systematic HRD process is needs assessment and analysis, and it can be known as the “why” of HRD. Leigh et al (2000) stressed the importance of assessing and analysing needs because this stage builds the foundation by identifying the kinds of HRD intervention needed for an effective effort. However, Desimone et al (2002) contended that in analysing HRD needs, four levels of needs has to be analysed. They include assessing the needs of the organisation, individual employees’ skills, knowledge and attitudes, and their functional responsibilities as well as departments’ needs (Wilson, 1999, Harrison, 2000). This proposition is argued by Kerr & McDougall (1999), that most companies do not analysed all the four levels, but rather emphasised on individual employees’ needs.

Turning to the methods used in accomplishing the identification of needs within organisation. Wilson (1999) suggested the conventional and simpler methods such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and focus groups to gather information for HRD needs analysis. On the contrary, Gilley et al, (2003) suggested the more analytical method such as is/should analysis, critical analysis and root-cause analysis methods to gather information. However, Reid and Barrington (1994) argued that methods of identification depend on the focus of investigation, and have proposed referencing to strategic planning documents relating to marketing, production, and staffing; analysing minutes of management meetings, and analysing operational and personal records. Indeed, Wilson (1999) has agreed that it is important to include the HR plan and the organisation’s strategic plan in needs analysis. Certainly, it was suggested by several

theorists the various methods of identifying needs analysis from the simpler methods suggested by Wilson (1999) to the more technical and complicated method by Gilley et al, (2003). However, researchers have argued that organisations would rather much preferred methods such as performance appraisals, informal feedback from line managers and individual employees (Tregaskis & Brewster, 1998; Madsen & Larsen, 1998; Baalen & Hoogendoorn, 1998; Kjellberg et al, 1998; Heraty & Morley, 2000; Elbadri, 2001; and Morrow, 2001). Particularly, in organisations adopting the ISO policy, Vinten (2000) claimed that employees' training needs through line managers' requests are highly associated with 'non-conformance' that is identified upon completion of the ISO auditing procedure.

Even though, it was deliberated by theorists and researchers on the importance of analysing needs, it was implied that many companies do not regard performing HRD needs analysis as a priority (Anderson, 1994; Smith, 1999; Bhatta, 2002; Budhwar et al, 2002), and this phenomenon is particularly obvious in small firms (Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Kerr & McDougall, 1999; Vinten, 2000; Hill & Stewart, 2000; Sadler-Smith & Lean, 2004). Indeed, there are various reasons why needs assessment is not conducted as it is described as being a difficult process, time consuming and lack of resources in carrying out the tasks (Anderson, 1994; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Madsen & Larsen, 1998; Smith, 1999; Heraty & Morley, 2000; Elbadri, 2001; Budhwar et al, 2002; Hansen, 2003; Hill & Stewart, 2000, Hill, 2004). On the other hand, Desimone et al (2002) argued that incorrect assumptions are usually made about needs analysis being unnecessary because the available information already specifies what an organisation's needs are. Furthermore, it was contested that there is a lack of support for needs assessments as HRD professionals are unable to convince top management of its necessity (Reid & Barrington, 1994; Wilson, 1999; McGoldrick, Stewart & Watson, 2002). This view is criticised by Smith (1999) because most companies do not employ qualified HRD professionals or trainers to manage their HRD functions, despite the fact that performing the complex task of analysing needs can be difficult.

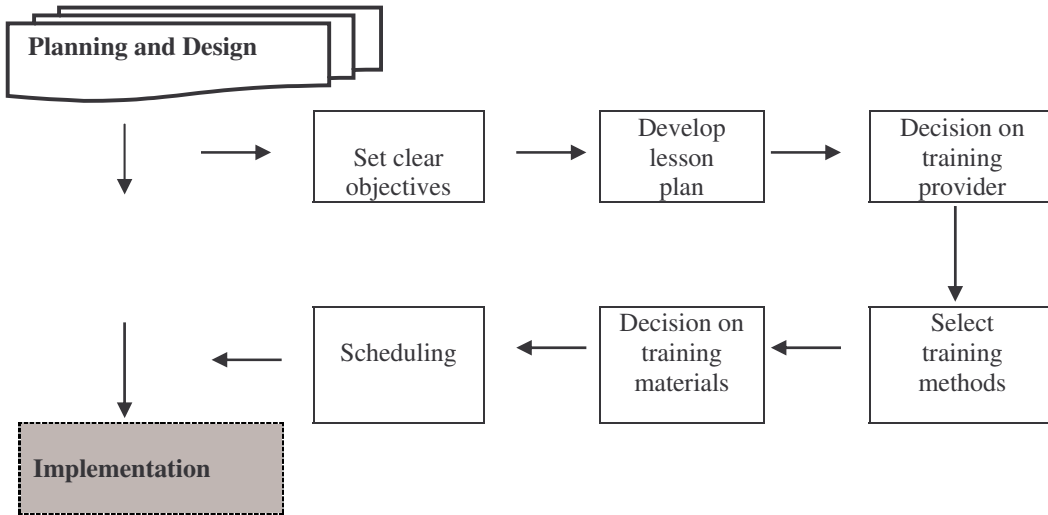
Planning and Design

The second stage in the systematic process is the planning and design – the 'how' of HRD. Delahaye (2000:230) suggested three important considerations in this second phase of the HRD process, namely the learning strategies to be used, the learning outcomes to be achieved and the people or the learners who will experience the learning episode. On the assumption that clear objectives have been set after the needs analysis process, it was suggested that HRD professionals will subsequently plan in selecting the appropriate training provider – to deploy internal expertise (Alzalabani, 2002; Desimone et al, 2002) or to outsource to external training provider in the absence of such expertise (Church & McMahan, 1991; McMahan & Woodman, 1992; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Gainey & Klaas, 2005). On the contrary, Desimone et al (2002) argued that developing lesson plans and selecting the appropriate methods of training delivery is also an important element in planning and design in HRD. As Nadler & Nadler (1994) contested that the lesson plan should serve as an important guide for the trainer in the actual delivery of the training content. Nevertheless, HRD professionals may also have to make decisions about whether to purchase training materials or to prepare them internally, and this depends upon whether the programme is purchased or designed by the organisations (Reid & Barrington, 1994). It was posited by Desimone et al (2002) that training programmes purchased from an external vendor are usually a complete package, unlike programmes designed in-house which will require HRD professionals to prepare the materials and to update and modify the materials to fit the current programme and environment. Unfortunately, it has been argued that frequent updating and reviewing of training materials is rare (Ardichvili & Gasparishvili, 2001).

Finally, the task of scheduling an HRD programme has been argued as being of equal importance because scheduling a programme can ensure that both trainers and participants are available for training and learning (Desimone, et al., 2002). In retrospect, there is also the element of budgeting, which is an important issue in the planning and design of learning activities. Some studies have indicated that organisations put less emphasis on HRD investments, as they consider that human resources' T&D to be a very expensive activity (see, for example, Cho et al, 1999; and Budhwar, et al., 2002). On the above premise, the importance of having HRD professionals with the creativity and expertise in decision making to select the appropriate training methods is critical in a challenging business environment in order to deliver effective HRD

interventions (Bing, Kehrahn & Short, 2003), particularly for developing knowledge workers (Harrison & Kessels, 2004).

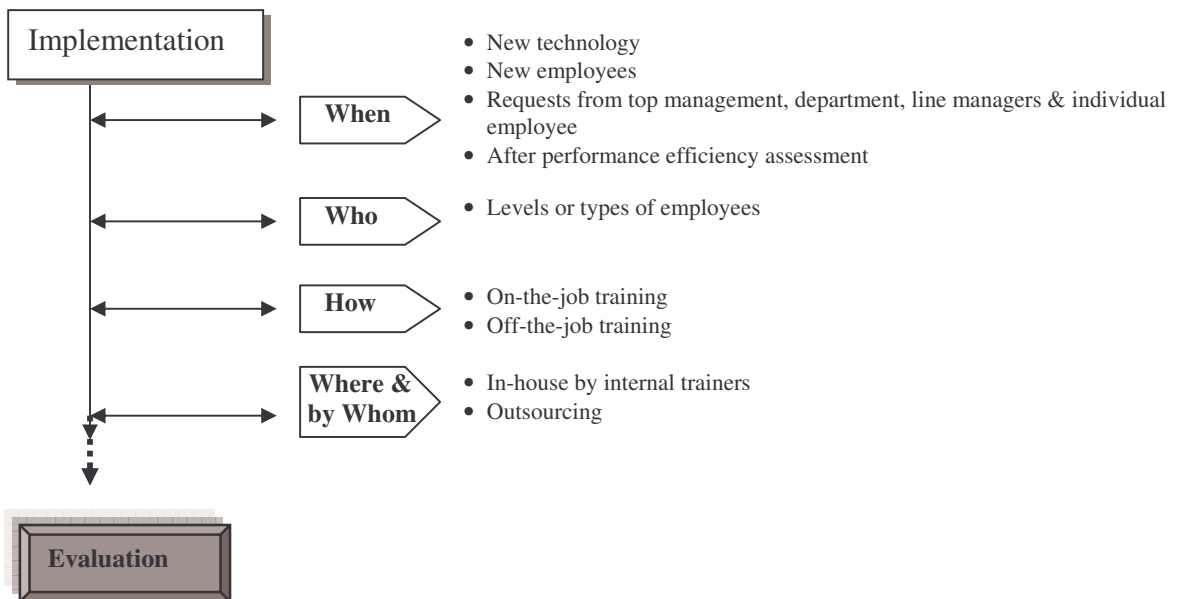
Figure 3: Planning and Design Diagram



Implementation

This is the third stage of the systematic HRD process and it focuses on four questions, namely: 1) the ‘when’ are employees provided with training; 2) the ‘who’ denoting what levels of employees are provided with training; 3) the ‘where’ and ‘by whom’ suggesting providers and trainers for delivering training; and 4) the ‘how’ denoting the methods used in delivering training. Again, it is emphasised that these reviews and discussions are valuable to this study as it forms an important part of the research, particularly in relation to the ‘when, who, where’ and ‘how’ HRD activities are being implemented in the manufacturing companies in Malaysia. The delivery and implementation diagram is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Implementation Diagram



First, beginning with the 'when' or provision of training, researchers has indicated that most organisations today are emphasising on training in new technologies, particularly to meeting the International Quality Standards as well as keeping up to the advancement in technology (Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Goodwin et al, 1999; Yadapadithaya, 2000; Dilworth, 2003; Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003). However, entry training or induction training was argued as highly recommended in assisting and motivating newly recruit employees (Saks, 1996; Jacobs & Washington, 2003). But this view is criticised as training provided to new employees or induction are rarely implemented in organisations, particularly in small firms (Kerr & McDougall, 1999; Fernald et al, 1999; Huang, 2001; Kotey & Sheridan, 2004). Other circumstance in which employees may be provided with training is when it is being requested by the top management, the department, line managers and individual employees (Tregaskis & Dany, 1996; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Heraty & Morley, 2000). Unfortunately, these requests are only approved upon evaluation of their specific needs and requirements (see for example, Baalen & Hoogendoorn, 1998; Soderstrom & Svensson, 1998; Elbadri, 2001; Morrow, 2001). Least of all, is the provision of training upon completion of performance efficiency assessment. Indeed, performance efficiency assessment as a basis in providing employees with training has been criticised as being neglected by employers (Bing et al, 2003).

Second, theorists have emphasised and argued on the importance of providing and spending for all levels of employees (from top management right down to shop floor employees) within an organisation with equal levels of training (Nadler & Wiggs, 1986; Nadler & Nadler, 1989 & 1994; Luoma, 2000). Conversely, the notion of equal provision was criticised as organisations may vary in their levels of training provision. For instance, Thursfield (2001) reported that production workers in the manufacturing companies in UK were provided with very little training compared to Morrow's (2001) claim that employees in the clerical level are provided with slightly higher provision of training to the other levels. In contrast, Luoma (2000) indicated that the technical and shop floor employees are highly considered as they are the human capital of the organisations than can drive the business and the organisation towards success. Nonetheless, the notion of equal provision and spending for employees' training may require further empirical examination.

Third, in relation to the 'where and by whom' (training providers), it was suggested by researchers that large organisations having a multifaceted training staff with competencies and subject-matter expertise to train will usually deploy their internal trainers in delivering training to their employees (Alzalabani, 2002; Desimone et al, 2002). Otherwise, the choice to outsource to external training providers will be considered in the absence of such competencies and expertise (Church & McMahan, 1991; McMahan & Woodman, 1992; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998). This may be true, as it has been argued that because of organisations lacking in internal expertise and professionals, the use of external consultants and training providers is seen to be becoming increasingly popular among most companies (Sadler-Smith, et al., 1998; Kjellberg et al., 1998; Madsen & Larsen, 1998; Mulder, et al., 1999; Hill & Stewart, 2000; Vinten, 2000; Morrow, 2001; Budhwar, et al., 2002; Ardichvili & Gasparishvili, 2001; Skule, et al., 2002; Dilworth, 2003; Sadler-Smith & Lean, 2004; Gainey & Klaas, 2005). On the other hand, it was argued that organisations are shifting the trend from the traditional form of in-house training to house T&D activities within a 'corporate university' because it was claimed that affiliation with universities may be able to offer all the consultancies and services required for HRD (Mulder & Tjepkema, 1999). However, the shift in trend may be because a conducive learning environment is required for training (Nadler & Nadler, 1989; Gilley, et al., 2002; and Lloyd, 2002).

Fourth, it has been claimed that methods of training delivery ranges from the conventional classroom method to the more advanced used of technology such as audio conferencing and virtual reality (Read & Kleiner, 1996; Wognum & Mulder, 1999). However, Dilworth (2003) argued that classroom-based training or off-the-job training is declining as technology and other methods of training delivery become more prevalent, which include mentorship, on-the-job instruction training, action learning, problem-based learning, fieldwork visits and job rotation. These approaches is categorised by Sparkes & Miyake (2000) as on-the-job training. Indeed, on-the-job instruction training has been suggested as frequently carried out in organisations (Tregaskis & Brewster, 1998; Tregaskis & Dany, 1996; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Madsen & Larsen, 1998; Kjellberg et al, 1998; Sadler-Smith et al, 2000; Budhwar et al, 2000; Elbadri, 2001; Garavan et al, 2002;

Sadler-Smith & Lean, 2004). Indeed, Lloyd (2002) described the on-the-job instruction as an informal system of training where workers learnt by 'doing' and were 'shown how the work should be done' by other employees. This was criticised by Heraty & Morley (2000) as ineffective since they were usually unplanned, unsystematic, informal and difficult to evaluate but they were recognised for providing a natural learning environment to employees and thereby can facilitate the transfer of learning. On the other hand, there were substantial criticisms on other on-the-job training such as field work visits (Koike, 1997; Wong, Maher, Nicholson & Bai, 2003) and job rotation (Thursfield, 2001). Even though, job rotation has gained wide acceptance by employers and employees in the US and in other developed countries (Ortega, 2001) and also viewed as having a positive impact on enhancing employees' knowledge and skills (Harada, 1999; Bacon & Blyton, 2003), it was claimed by Thursfield (2001) as unpopular by employees. Unlike, job rotation, field work visits was criticised for being expensive despite the benefits of learning and the ability to transfer learning and knowledge (Koike, 1997; Wong et al, 2003). However, generally, it was argued that forming employees' intellectual skills through on-the-job training is a critical success factor in organisations (Riding & Mortimer, 2000) and a prospect for further skills development (Koike, 1997).

In contrast, as the name implies, off-the-job training denotes learning that is performed away from the employees' work or outside the workplace, which may be conducted through lectures in a classroom or one-to-one instruction (Read & Kleiner, 1996). And this method of training delivery was criticised as being less favourable in organisations as the more advanced and sophisticated methods of training delivery such as the use of multimedia learning and computer-based learning are increasingly being deployed rather than the conventional lectures (Read & Kleiner, 1996; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Mulder & Tjepkema, 1999; Sadler-Smith et al, 2000; Marquart et al, 2000; Ardishvili & Gasparishvili, 2001; Dilworth, 2003). However, Sparkes & Miyake (2000) argued that off-the-job training assists employees with the basic concepts, whilst the on-the-job training supplements the development of intellectual skills. Indeed, rather than using a single training mechanism, the deployment of both methods is argued as a better practice to enhance the acquisition of learning and the transfer of knowledge (Tregaskis & Brewster, 1998; Kjellberg et al, 1998; Sparkes & Miyake, 2000). At the very least, it has been contested that a combination of on-the-job training in practice and classroom instruction in off-the-job training for general training may be effective and may benefit both the employees and the organisation (Gattiker, 1995).

Conversely, other off-the-job methods of training delivery have been suggested in the literature as being of equally distinct in organisations. These may include planned training experiences such as outdoor-based training and learning and total quality-related activities as in quality control circles. The benefits of outdoor-based training were claimed as having the ability to develop effective work teams and also the ability to enhance leadership and management skills (Badger et al, 1997; McEvoy & Cragun, 1997; Short et al, 2002; Francis, 2003). But, Wagner & Campbell (1994) reported that the effectiveness of this training delivery is being criticised and questioned by researchers and practitioners, and is now replaced by virtual reality training, particularly in the US and the UK. This view is argued by Keller & Olson (2000) debating that the traditional form of classroom-based training are equally effective in building teams and for leadership development. However, despite the various methods of training delivery suggested in the literature, each of which is important and effective in its own way, the types of training methods selected in delivering training may well depend on the objective of the programme and the expected learning outcome.

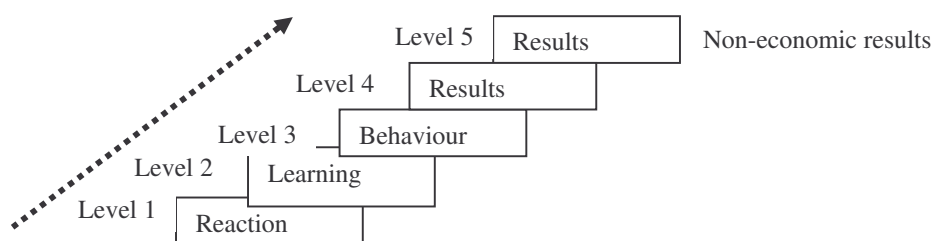
2. 4. Evaluation

Evaluation is the final stage in the HRD process. Similar to other stages of the HRD process, this evaluation stage is equally important and very relevant to this research, specifically in discussing evaluation of training in the manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Moreover, it is worth noting that all the four stages of the HRD process are the macro-level of HRD activities and directly related to research question three and four.

Evaluation on training effectiveness is suggested by some theorists as having four levels, namely, the first stage is designed to measure employees' reaction on training; the second is measure employees level of learning acquisition; whilst the third stage is meant to measure the employees' behaviour and transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes to the work environment; the fourth and final stage is assessing the results of training on the company's financial performance (Kirkpatrick, 1994; Delahaye, 2000). However, it was

argued that the fourth 'results' level is only assessing the non-economic impact of training such as employees' morale, learning, behavioural change and transfer of learning, and also assessing the intangible economic results within an organisation (Hamblin, 1974; Whitelaw, 1972; Reid & Barrington, 2003). As a result, researchers proposed that the tangible economic results can be measured in terms of their financial returns and benefits. And the fifth level of evaluation was suggested to assess the return-on-investment (ROI) on training programmes (Reid & Barrington, 2003). Building on the above premise, the five levels of the evaluation process can be clearly illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Levels of Evaluation (Developed from Kirkpatrick, 1994; and Mitchell, 1994)



First, given the importance of evaluation, training programmes are expected to be evaluated carefully and regularly. Unfortunately, this is not the case. For instance, Benabou (1996) reported that '*almost all organizations conduct some kind of evaluation, but very few do it at the fourth level. This is because many practitioners think that business results evaluation is difficult or impractical to perform...*' Blanchard et al, (2000:301) reiterated that organizations are only evaluating the first two levels of reaction and learning due to the high cost of conducting rigorous evaluations at every level. Moreover, measuring employees' reaction to training and learning acquisition are viewed as the easiest part of the evaluation process for them to be frequently performed in most organisations (Kjellberg et al, 1998; Baalen et al, 1998; Madsen & Larsen, 1998; Heraty & Morley, 2000; Blanchard et al, 2000; Morrow, 2001; Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003). Indeed, it was claimed by some theorists that the first level can reveal trainees satisfaction with the training programme as demonstrated by their immediate reactions about the trainer, method of presentation, usefulness and interest of the subject matter and facilities for training (Bregman & Jacobson, 2000; Delahaye, 2000). However, the second level of the evaluation was criticised as only valid upon the 'pre' and 'post' training assessment (Warr, Allan & Birdi, 1999), in which case, Yadapadithaya & Stewart (2003) claimed that this process is rarely demonstrated.

A similar criticism is seen with the third, fourth and fifth stage of the evaluation process as researchers criticised its absence in organisations (see for example, Bassi et al, 1997). On this premise, Swanson and Holton III (2001:364) argued that one of the most common reasons for not evaluating these levels is usually lack of time. Indeed, the absence in these stages of the evaluation process is argued as a common phenomenon by some researchers (see for example, Blanchard et al, 2000; Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003). Moreover, studies have shown that a fraction of organisations are evaluating training programmes annually or more than twice a year (Budwar, et al., 2002; Alzalabani, 2002), otherwise, evaluation is a forgotten process (Smith, 1999; and Junaidah, 2001).

To facilitate the evaluation process, some theorists suggested several methods of evaluation, namely, interviews with learners, interviews with supervisors, informal feedback, observation by course organisers and self-assessments other than the more formal and structured methods such as examinations and tests, performance appraisals, attitude and questionnaire surveys (see for example, Brinkerhoff, 1998; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Bassi et al, 1997; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998; Blanchard et al, 2000; Heraty & Morley, 2000; Swanson & Holton III, 2001; Swanson, 2001; Yadapadithaya, 2001; Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003). However, among all these suggested methods, it was found that the most commonly used method for monitoring the effectiveness and improvement of training programmes is informal feedback from both

managers and trainees as well as observation of learning outcomes (see for example, Smith, 1999; Budhwar et al., 2002; Alzalabani, 2002).

Finally, it was posited by Swanson and Holton III (2001:364) that many organisations considered that evaluation is a difficult or most often ignored part of T&D in which return-on-investment analysis is the hardest part of the evaluation process. Swanson (2001) contested that less than 5 percent of all training programmes in organisation are assessed for their financial benefits. The common reasons suggested for not doing evaluations are: afraid of criticism and programme cuts if the evaluation shows that the programme was not effective; requires time, resources and expertise that the HRD staff may not have or may not be willing to expend; factors beyond the programme itself such as company's financial standing, equipment, policies and procedures, other HR efforts, and resource availability (Desimone, et al., 2002; Mitchell, 1994; Torres, 2004; Torres et al, 2005). Moreover, Bregman & Jacobson (2000) criticised that assessing the impact of training on the company's financial performance as a tough and difficult process to isolate a direct cause-and-effect relationships between most training programmes and the business bottom line. Nonetheless, despite the difficulty in evaluation, and the complication of assessing the financial returns of T&D activities, it has been widely demonstrated as feasible in organisations (Swanson and Holton III, 2001; Swanson, 2001; Torres, 2004; Torres et al, 2005), and also informational concerning what training is doing for the employees and shows the value of training (Mitchell, 1994; Sadler-Smith et al, 1998).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the four-step HRD process were delineated and charted, and all the four steps are important towards achieving an effective design and implementation of HRD programs. Failure and success of HRD programs and activities depended on the systematic approach of HRD. In the event, one step of the systematic approach is circumvented, the possibility of an effective HRD programs may occur. Hence, it is pertinent that organisations abide to the systematic approach of HRD as it covers the 'why' human resource should be trained and developed, the methods and approaches to be utilised in the training and development activities, the "who" should be given the necessary and relevant training, the when and where training and development should be implemented and finally, measuring the effectiveness of HRD programs and effectiveness.

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