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ABSTRACT

The bounds of the field of human resource development (HRD) have expanded beyond the individual and organizational levels of analysis to macro perspectives of HRD such as National, Regional, and Global HRD. In international development contexts, a comparable construct is used by development agencies and national governments to describe knowledge- and skill-building, i.e. capacity development (CD) or capacity building. To overcome the complexity and ambiguity involved in these two concepts in the extant literature, this conceptual article provides an overview of the conceptualization, objectives, levels, approaches, evaluation, and definitional analysis of CD. It then presents a comparison between the concepts of CD and HRD and highlights key similarities and differences. The paper concludes with implications for HRD research and practice as it relates to CD and a call for HRD scholars to support CD practice and policy through research and learn from CD practitioners in terms of understanding mechanisms for national, regional, and global development.

As the field of human resource development (HRD) began taking shape since Nadler (1984) published the first *Handbook of Human Resource Development*, the scope and activities considered HRD have steadily expanded from early foci on individual and organizational performance improvement to 'any process or activity' that develops 'adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction' (McLean and McLean 2001, 322). Scholars and practitioners have stressed the need for organizations to invest in HRD to enhance the quality of human contributions and engagement and thereby gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Nolan and Garavan 2016; Torraco and Lundgren 2020). Prior to and throughout this time, a related field of practice emerged around the world that also contributed to the development adults' knowledge, skills, abilities as well as the improvement or organizational effectiveness and societal development. This was capacity development. What is capacity development and how, if at all, does it differ from the work of HRD? Does conflating the terms matter for HRD

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scholarship and practice? Should the work of governments and international organizations in building the capacity of adults in emerging economies be considered HRD? These questions underpin this conceptual paper as we seek to disentangle these inter-related concepts and offer clarity for HRD scholars and practitioners.

Though the concept of capacity development (CD) is relatively new in academic literature and lacks a robust theoretical foundation, it has long been a central focus in development and assistance programmes throughout the world after World War II. In international development projects often led by governments and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CD is regarded as the fundamental means to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Vallejo and When 2016). CD is often conceptualized at three comprehensive and reciprocally interactive levels: individual, organizational, and environmental (i.e. the enabling environment) (Otoo, Agapitova, and Behrens 2009). It focuses on processes, approaches, methodologies, and plans that seek to improve performance at these levels through education, training, development, and learning. It is evident in the extant literature that HRD activities like training are central to nearly every CD initiative typically undertaken by donor agencies or NGOs in emerging economies (Pearson 2011). In addition to donor agencies, many organizations such as educational institutions and business conglomerates also run CD activities that look beyond training to a broader conception of HRD (Analoui and Danquah 2017). Hence, the concept of CD which is generally used within the literature on international development has relevance to the field of HRD. This relevance is found in a cursory review of HRD literature, which shows the study of capacity building (the activity of CD) in the Royal University of Phnom Penh (Brooks and Monirith 2010), the multi-level framework for CD for National HRD (Alagaraja and Githens (2016), and the use of CD in understanding Regional HRD in Southeast Asia (Crocco and Tkachenko 2022).

Both CD and HRD are primarily concerned with learning as a way to bring about effectiveness and efficiency within different spheres of adult life. While HRD tends to focus on training and development in organizational contexts (Torraco and Lundgren 2020), CD often considers broader applications, which include institutional building and development at the community and societal levels (Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999). Thus, this article contends that CD encompasses HRD in that training as an HRD intervention is part of nearly all CD. On the other hand, the emerging discourse around National HRD implies that National HRD encompasses CD. Given the apparent overlap and ambiguity of these concepts, this study aims to enhance conceptual clarity between CD and HRD by exploring their definitions, theoretical underpinnings, and practical approaches.

The specific objectives guiding this inquiry are first to explore the concept and critical aspects of CD, and second to reflect on how CD fits within HRD research and practice. Conceptual papers 'focus on a problem sharing new insights by connecting existing theories, working across disciplines, and providing in-depth insights that push the boundaries of a concept' (Rocco et al. 2022, p. 115). In the case of this paper, the contribution is in 'connecting concepts' i.e. CD and HRD, and 'proposing a relationship between [these] concepts' (Rocco et al. 2022, pp. 118–119). Building on the authors' experience in both HRD and CD in multiple contexts around the world as well as a review of the scholarly literature, this conceptual paper offers important

conceptual clarity missing from existing HRD research. This article is organized by first providing an overview of the conceptualization, objectives, levels, approaches, evaluation, and definitional analysis of CD. It then presents a comparison between the concepts of CD and HRD and highlights key similarities and differences. The paper concludes with implications for HRD research and practice as it relates to CD.

Capacity development

Conceptualization of CD

Since the 1960s, conventional forms of development aid have been criticized due to the discrepancy between the substantial amount of investment – including the ample number of expatriates assigned to emerging economies for providing support – and the unimpressive outcomes attained in the form of sustainable development (Kühl 2009; Nair 2003). This has necessitated a growing sense that emerging economies must seek to capitalize more efficiently on development assistance to achieve desired results (Kühl 2009). The success of development aid fundamentally depends on how well the recipients apply the aid to resolve their problems rather than treat the assistance as a credit, subsidy, or expert advice (Jaycox 1993). The concept of CD emerged in the 1980s in discussions between funding agencies, governments, and leaders in countries and communities receiving aid. These stakeholders agreed that without enhanced capability of individuals, groups, organizations, and society at large, efficient utilization of resources and economic development would be difficult to achieve (Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999).

The concept of CD gained prominence during the 1990s and has since become a central focus of development work (Kühl 2009; Lavergne and Saxby 2001). Initially, CD was promoted as an instrument to decrease poverty in emerging economies but has expanded beyond poverty reduction (Analoui and Danquah 2017; Merino and Carmenado 2012). In its current forms, CD draws on long-term experience to cultivate more methodical and multilingual approaches that are embedded in emerging economy ownership and concentrated on a host of viable outcomes (Bolger 2000). Now, CD has widespread adoption, and almost all the major national and transnational development assistance organizations have published policy papers related to its implementation and value (Kühl 2009).

The term 'capacity' denotes the capabilities that are necessary to assume responsibility for the improvement of an individual's life and work environment. This includes job-specific skills, such as operating machinery, technical know-how, and manual skills, as well as generic skills, such as conceptual, diagnostic, problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills (Kühl 2009). Developing capacity is needed at every level ranging from individual to supranational since it is a vital vehicle of performance improvement (Horton 2002). Thus, capacity in its varied forms is the outcome of CD processes (Analoui and Danquah 2017). Put another way, CD is the process by which individuals, groups, and organizations can enhance their capabilities to perform their roles and attain the anticipated outcomes over time (Morgan 1997).

From the definition of Morgan (1997), Horton (2002) discovered two vital aspects of CD: that it is mostly an internal growth and development process and that it should focus on lasting results or impact. It also has a scope ranging from individual to organizational

development (Morgan 1997). The scope of CD, much like the scope of HRD, has expanded in recent years and many conceive of it as including societal or national development (CIDA 2000; OECD-DAC 2006; Otoo, Agapitova, and Behrens 2009; UNDP 2008; Wubneh 2003). This expansion of scope and focus on lasting results has come with the recognition that change and development happens within complex social systems and will not result in sustainable development if conducted in isolation (Kühl 2009).

Notably, the terms CD and capacity building are often used interchangeably and can be stretched to embrace many different activities, such as training and workshops (Horton 2002), organizational development (Harrison 1994), employee empowerment (Eade 1997; Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991), and institutional improvement (Picciotto and Wiesner 1998; UNDP 1998). Despite their overlapping use in development discourse (Analoui and Danquah 2017), they have different connotations in practice. The idea of capacity building refers to introducing new capacities in a population through activities that are cautiously planned and implemented by following a clear blueprint (Horton 2002). On the other hand, CD is an approach that builds on the pre-existing knowledge and skills, driving a dynamic and flexible transformation process that is acknowledged by local actors. Thus, to conduct CD requires more investigation as well as learning (Horton 1999). It can be viewed as an umbrella concept (Morgan 1998) under which several approaches to development support are included (Kühl 2009) to achieve certain objectives, which are discussed in the next section.

Objectives of CD

Whether CD is manifested as a large-scale initiative or a targeted project (Lavergne and Saxby 2001), the overarching purpose of CD is to pursue development goals or long-term objectives and accelerate development systematically (Analoui and Danquah 2017). CD as an approach intends to achieve development goals such as the SDGs and millennium development goals (MDGs) which are articulated and agreed upon by international bodies like the United Nations (Analoui and Danquah 2017). Furthermore, CD emphasizes bridging development gaps that agencies recognize require action, such as interventions related to education, training, and organizational development (Analoui and Danquah 2017).

More precisely, the major objectives of CD are enhancing and utilizing abilities, skills, and resources more effectively; strengthening understanding and relationships among stakeholders; and addressing issues of values, attitudes, motivations, and conditions for supporting sustainable development (Bolger 2000). Put another way, Merino and Carmenado (2012) opined that CD as a strategy relates primarily to improving living standards or building new organizations with enhanced capacity to address and solve different socio-economic problems such as poverty. To achieve these objectives, capacities are to be developed at three interdependent levels.

Levels of CD

CD is comprised of three comprehensive and reciprocally interactive levels which are individual, organizational, and enabling environment or system (Analoui and Danquah 2017; Nair 2003; OECD-DAC 2006; UNDP 2008). Given the nature of social systems,

these three levels of CD are interlinked in such a way that any guided advancement is possible only when all these levels are considered (Kühl 2009). If any intervention is undertaken at just one level, the consequences will dissipate, and hence sustainable development will be difficult to ensure. Thus, effective CD requires the simultaneous development of human resources, strengthening of the organization, and founding of supportive environmental conditions (Kühl 2009).

CD at the individual level

Conventionally, CD at the individual level focuses on training through which the knowledge, mindsets, and/or skills of an individual are enhanced (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010). Organizations and countries today are compelled to nurture their employees/citizens with required knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies so that they can function more efficiently (Analoui and Danquah 2017). This can be ensured through three measures i.e. education, training, and learning (Analoui 2007). The individual level refers to individuals from all walks of life, e.g. planners, accountants, engineers, farmers, etc. who are viewed as social or organizational actors (Bolger 2000). The underlying perspective is that change at the individual level in terms of skills and abilities should be contemplated as a segment of a broader CD framework (Bolger 2000).

CD at the organizational level

At the organizational level, CD mainly focuses on the improvement of the management system as well as restructuring within the organization or reformation of the public sector which may be decentralization or modernization of civil service (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010). Though in this scenario Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010) mainly emphasized public sector reformation, the OECD-DAC (2006) argues that organizational level CD encompasses public, private, and even civil society organizations in terms of strategic management activities, operational capacity, human resources, financial resources, information resources, and infrastructure. In fact, every formal and informal institution should be taken into consideration in the process of capacity building and institutional strengthening as disregarding informal institutions might adversely lead to resistance, and consequently, endanger CD prospects (Abdel-Malek, Leautier, and Straface 2011). At this level, the institutional development approach is incorporated (Kühl 2009) to allow organizations to operate and deliver their directions by having internal rules, regulations, and frameworks that enhance the capacity of individuals to work collectively in the path of attaining organizational objectives (UNDP 2008).

CD at the environmental level

The enabling external environment or system significantly influences the success of individual and organizational level CD interventions, and this realization consequently leads CD initiatives to address politics and policies (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010). For instance, strengthening civil society and budgeting for the poor are such upper-level CD initiatives that they are inextricably connected to individual-level CD efforts (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010). The type of approach being incorporated at the system level is called new institutionalism (Kühl 2009).

The enabling environment supports the cycle by which the partner country is being empowered to enhance its CD with the financial and technical assistance primarily from donors (Analoui and Danquah 2017). It subsequently reinstates the concern and involvement of both individuals and organizations (Analoui and Danquah 2017). However, both enablers and disablers subsist in the environment affecting CD initiatives of the recipient country. Thus, Abdel-Malek, Leautier, and Straface (2011) asserted that the desire and devotion of individual champions, combined with the incentives posed by enablers and restraints prevailing in the environment, will ascertain whether change and CD will indeed take place.

Approaches to CD

While a holistic view of CD necessitates all three levels discussed above, there are different approaches to CD which emphasize the different levels. Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger (1999) provided a taxonomy of four specific approaches to CD which include the organizational approach, institutional approach, system approach, and participatory process approach. The first approach emphasizes building capacity at the single organization level. The second approach focuses on the rules and processes regulating the socio-economic and political institutions in society at large. The third approach accentuates the interdependencies among social actors as well as the necessity for fostering capacity building holistically. Finally, the participatory approach considers ownership and participation as elementary components of CD. While all approaches have merit, Analoui and Danquah (2017) stressed that adopting the participatory approach in CD programmes and projects increases chances of long-term progress. They also asserted that this approach should be developed into an empowering partnership so that all who are involved can have a higher sense of belonging (Analoui and Danquah 2017).

Evaluation of CD

Given the expectations of donors and funding agencies to produce measurable results, evaluation has always been a core component of CD and has evolved over time in three waves (Huyse et al. 2012). In the 1980s, the central focus of donors' practice and discourse was not the financial or technical support to be provided for recipients' CD (Huyse et al. 2012), and accordingly, the early endeavour regarding the evaluation of CD interventions was significantly influenced by the assessment procedures stemming from formal education and training (Horton et al. 2003). The various CD interventions were based on a fundamental assumption that education or training can positively change the performance level of individual employees and subsequently lead to a better-performing organization in a linear fashion (Huyse et al. 2012). This tunnel vision of how the change process occurs through almost a direct cause-and-effect relationship is followed by the corresponding evaluation practices, i.e. striving to track the consequences of education or training from the output to the impact level (Huyse et al. 2012). However, this evaluation approach was later criticized for having major limitations in real-life situations, given that there are many factors other than education or training that can deter learning and utilization of skills (Horton et al. 2003; Simister and Smith 2010).

The second wave of evaluation, known as the organizational and institutional wave, took place towards the end of the 1990s when new interventions emphasized the importance of organizational and institutional development (Huyse et al. 2012). Practitioners started applying several organizational capacity assessment (OCA) tools to plan, monitor and evaluate CD activities (Huyse et al. 2012). Initially, these tools mostly focused on harder aspects of capacity such as infrastructure and accounting and were consequently criticized for their incapability to capture the softer dimensions like organizational change (e.g. skill development), as well as the problems associated with the non-specific use of explicit categorization of capacity, and the problems with the accumulation of contrast of scoring across the organizations (Huyse et al. 2012).

The limitations of the second wave gave rise to a third, more complex wave of evaluation. Over the years, stakeholders experienced frustrating outcomes of CD interventions (OECD-DAC 2006). During this third wave, particularly from 2005 to 2010, the complex nature of the CD process had been critically addressed in numerous studies and white papers (Baser and Morgan 2008; Boesen 2009; Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo, and Fowler 2010). The conventional evaluation approaches of previous waves tended only to capture a closed-system perspective of organizational and institutional change undermining the impact of internal and external variables on the aspect of CD as well as how it arises (Huyse et al. 2012). This third wave began to recognize the oversimplification of those waves and led to a more holistic form of evaluation.

The different insights that emerged during the last wave of evaluation (Eraut 2007; Reeler 2007) helped to develop a consensus concerning the building block of CD holistically (Baser and Morgan 2008; James and Haily 2007). The consensus was that the term capacity does not merely imply the ability to develop hard or technical skills, rather it also encompasses soft elements such as motivation, morale, flexibility, genuineness, and the realization of a positive organizational culture (Baser and Morgan 2008; James and Haily 2007). It also regarded CD as a multifaceted, extensive, constant, and endogenous process that occurs inside the organization and hence cannot be controlled by external variables though actors residing outside can sometimes affect the pace and direction of change (Baser and Morgan 2008; James and Haily 2007). Thus, in terms of the evaluation of a CD programme, it can be inferred that both hard and soft elements are vital components of CD interventions.

Definitional analysis of CD

Synthesizing the definitions of CD (see Table 1) and their underlying themes, CD emerges as a complicated endogenous process that entails individuals, groups, organizations, society, and countries. Though this term is applicable broadly, it is mostly used by donors, international development agencies, planners, and strategists. The typical interventions that are undertaken to make the CD process a success are comparable to HRD measures which include education, training, and organizational development. This continuous learning process is centred on developing a competent workforce to ensure improved individual and collective performance with the aim of attaining long-term development goals in a sustained way. Though it involves making all the required hard and soft resources available and ensuring their proper utilization, specifically its focus is on the human aspect of the organization or society. Thus, the success of CD interventions

Table 1. Definitional analysis of Capacity Development and Capacity Building.

Author	Definition
Morgan (1998, 6)	Capacity building 'is a risky, murky, messy business, with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, contested objectives, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long-time lags'.
Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995, 445)	'Capacity Building improvement in the ability of public sector organizations, either singly or in cooperation with other organizations, to perform appropriate tasks'.
CIDA (2000, 2)	CD 'refers to the approaches, strategies, and methodologies used by developing country, and/or external stakeholders, to improve performance at the individual, organizational, network/sector or broader system level'.
Morgan (1997, 2)	CD refers to 'the growth of formal organizational relationship and abilities, i.e. those changes in organizational behaviour, skills and relationship that lead to the improved abilities of groups and organizations to carry out functions and achieve desired outcomes overtime'.
Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger (1999, 1)	The concept of 'CD involves the institutional building, institutional development, HRD, development or administration and institutional Strengthening'.
Wubneh (2003, 169)	Capacity building can be defined as the 'process of transforming a nation's ability to effectively implementing policies and programs to ensure sustainable development'.
Potter and Brough (2004, 337)	Capacity building refers to the 'creation, extension or up-gradation of a stock of anticipated qualities and characteristics called capabilities that could be constantly drawn upon over time. It aims to increase the stock rather than manage whatever is accessible'.
OECD-DAC (2006), 9)	CD is a 'process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and broadly societies enhance their abilities for two main purposes, such as (1) performing roles, solving problems and achieving objectives, and (2) understanding and dealing with their development in a broader context and in a sustainable way'.
UNDP (2008, 4)	CD is a 'process through which individuals, organizations and societies gain, reinforce and uphold their capabilities to determine and accomplish their development objectives over time'.
Baser and Morgan (2008, 20)	CD is embedded in the assumption of the 'dynamics of change'.
Otoo, Agapitova, and Behrens (2009, 3)	CD refers to the 'readiness of resources as well as the degree of effectiveness and efficiency to which societies can utilize those resources for identifying and attaining their development goals sustainably'.
Hope (2006, 80)	CD is the 'enhancement of the competency of the range of social actors to engage in activities in a sustainable manner for positive development impacts – poverty reduction, improvement in governance quality, or meeting millennium development goals'.
Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo, and Fowler (2010, 4)	CD 'changes in capacity over time – endogenous and continuous/spontaneous process'.
World Bank (2002, 3)	CD is a 'locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that bring about change in socio-political, policy-related, and organizational factors to enhance local ownership for and effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development objective'.

largely relies on how efficiently people can learn and apply relevant knowledge and skills into practice. Given this focus on people, exploring the nature of HRD facilitates understanding of the relevance and relationship between CD and HRD, which is discussed in the subsequent section.

Connecting concepts: the link between CD and HRD

To connect the concepts of CD and HRD, it is important to see how their evolution as constructs moved them closer together over time. Take the emergence of CD. Though the general goals of development projects have always been similar in nature, i.e. alleviating poverty and enhancing quality of life (WRI 2008), the focus of these projects shifted from the 1950s to the 1970s (Horton et al. 2003; Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999). In the 1950s, development was more concentrated on concrete,

tangible aspects like financial and physical infrastructure to establish institutions (WRI 2008). However, development agencies and governments soon realized that simply giving countries and communities financial resources and constructing infrastructure without providing training for people meant that their contributions would quickly fade away. Thus, in the 1970s, the focus shifted to more people-centric and intangible facets such as education and health care (Merino and Carmenado 2012) to strengthen those established institutions (WRI 2008). Soon after, the focus on formal education was replaced by an emphasis on short-term training (Merino and Carmenado 2012). Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, the central focus moved to macro considerations of the CD of national institutions (Merino and Carmenado 2012). The current ethos of CD focuses on building joint projects with shared ownership and processes as crucial elements that involve sustainability in their goals (Horton et al. 2003; Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999).

In the 21st century, development agencies such as UNESCO (2010) began emphasizing HRD as the individual-level focus of CD activities, in particular training. Other organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) spoke of Regional HRD policies and activities that related to building capacity of adult workers through training and development (Crocco and Tkachenko 2022; Crocco 2021). While early conceptualizations of HRD were narrower, as the field developed, it broadened its scope beyond foci on training and development and moved to changes in the overall system of the organization centred on human resources (Swanson 1999). HRD also deals with developing the organization focusing on the attainment of both individual as well as institutional goals (Chalofsky 1992; Marsick and Watkins 1994; McLagan and Suhadolnik 1989; Stewart and McGoldrick 1996; Swanson 1995; Watkins 1989). And now, with the emergence of National HRD (Alagaraja and Githens 2016; McLean 2014) and Regional HRD (Crocco and Tkachenko 2022; Tkachenko et al. 2022), there is even more overlap between the HRD and CD in terms of national and supranational development. Still, there are some important key differences and similarities in need of discussion (see Table 2).

As Analoui and Danquah (2017) demonstrate, in many ways CD is broader and more all-encompassing than HRD given that enhancing employees' and even organization development are only two levels of CD. At the individual level, CD and HRD are virtually interchangeable given their alignment with seminal definitions like McLean and McLean (2001) as harnessing or strengthening the skills and abilities of individual actors so that they can better contribute to the achievement of development objectives (Bolger 2000). At the organizational level, the inherent meaning of CD and HRD is also riddled with overlap given that an organization is nothing but a group of people working together in a structured and coordinated fashion to achieve a set of goals effectively and efficiently (Griffin 2017). Therefore, the capacity of the organization and that of its employees can be regarded as aligned. Lengnick-Hall, Beck, and Lengnick-Hall (2011) suggested that despite experiencing unfavourable, unstable, and uncertain circumstances, resilient organizations can thrive through practising strategic HRD activities and specifically creating competencies among key employees. When an organization faces severe shock, it can subsist and grow further by developing its capacity for resilience and this capacity aggregated at the organizational level refers to the capacity to develop human resources (Lengnick-Hall, Beck, and Lengnick-Hall 2011).

Table 2. Comparison of CD and HRD.

Component	CD	HRD	Key Similarities	Key Differences
Meaning	CD is an organic process by which an individual, group, organization, society and broadly a nation can improve capacities to make the best utilization of resources available	HRD is a strategic learning and development process incorporating proactive and system-wide interventions by which individuals and organizations can improve their workplace effectiveness and efficiency	Focus on improving performance	HRD is primarily concerned with performance through an organization while CD more commonly is associated with performance through country's/national development strategy
Users	This term is used by international development agencies, donors, planners, strategists, and development practitioners	This term is largely used by HRD professionals within organizations and researchers across the HRM and HRD disciplines	Occasional overlap on international projects or partnerships between corporations and development agencies	CD practitioners are often trained in development studies or a content area of development such as healthcare whereas HRD practitioners are often trained through explicit HRD programs
Objective	To accomplish long-term development goals in a sustainable way that align with international development frameworks	To foster employee learning as well as strengthen overall organizational strategy and system to improve performance and achieve both individual and organizational long-term goals	Achieving goals of host system	HRD typically achieves organizational development through organizational strategies while CD typically achieves sustainable development through country's development strategies
Scope	Involves three major levels encompassing individual, organizational and environmental or system level	Primarily at individual and organizational levels but recognition of systems theory and increasingly popular National and Regional HRD	Encompasses individual, organizational and systems	HRD occurs primarily at the organizational level whereas the scope of CD is primarily at the country level
Assumption	Positive change in capacities is the key to achieving development goals	Change is inevitable, so it is better to focus is on performance improvement through learning and behavioural change to achieve or maintain competitive advantage	Change is a natural and unstoppable aspect of social reality	CD assumes societal change comes from interventions at individual, organizational, and societal levels whereas HRD is not as concerned with societal change unless it influences an organizations ability to accomplish its goals
Activities	Workshops, training, education, organizational development, employee empowerment, institutional improvement, etc.	Education, training and development, coaching, mentoring, career development, and various organization development interventions	Training and learning activities	HRD tends to have a short-term lens while CD tends to focus more on long-term and sustained change
Focus	Developing both hard resources as well as technical skills and soft or managerial skills that support a country's institutional development	Developing human potential in every learning aspect as it is aligned with the values of the host system or organization.	Focuses on soft aspects of developing human skills, knowledge, abilities, mindsets, dispositions, etc.	CD can include so-called hard development such as financial resources, infrastructure, or technology

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Component	CD	HRD	Key Similarities	Key Differences
Evaluation Approach	Measuring individual and organizational performance as well as human development metrics and national development	Evaluate employee learning and performance as well as organizational outcomes and return on investment	Oriented towards demonstrating results	CD includes metrics related to health, wellbeing, and equity that are less emphasized in most HRD contexts
Influence	The external environment or system significantly influences the effectiveness of CD efforts, and CD seeks to change legal and cultural frameworks to suit other levels	HRD activities are affected by the state of the overall system or broader macro-environmental segments such as political, cultural, and economic forces and often do not seek to transform national systems	Recognition of external influences	CD activities are almost sponsored by development agencies and can include loans or other repayment methods whereas HRD activities are typically funded by the host system and influenced by organizational priorities and resource allocation

CD at the organizational level emphasizes developing management systems and broadly the institution or organization (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010; Kühl 2009). This emphasis is also a common objective within HRD as exemplified by Wilson (2009) regarding people as the focal point of organization development (OD) and viewing the development and involvement of people as central to organizational CD. Ideally, practices like staffing, ethnic group integration, and HRD functions are positively correlated with an enhanced state of capacity and performance and are instrumental to decentralization and reformation (Berman 2015). Without having more capable and efficient performers it is not at all possible to satisfy development goals at any stage (Berman 2015) and hence individual development should be given the top priority. Thus, one key difference is in the objectives of CD and HRD. Whereas CD seeks to accomplish long-term development goals according to frameworks like the SDGs, HRD seeks to employ interventions related to the learning and performance goals of the host system (or individual actors) for either the short or long term (Wang et al. 2017). This means that while CD generally assumes positive change and is grounded in ethical frameworks such as human development (Sen 2000) or the capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2001), HRD is employed by individuals, groups, organizations, communities, nations, and regions to achieve the goals of those individuals and organizations, which are typically connected to competitive advantage in a free market economy.

With regard to the environmental level, CD interventions are affected by the external environment as well as the system (Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010). Similarly, HRD is underpinned by systems thinking, and HRD practitioners must consider environmental factors to gain competitive advantage (Beer and Spector 1985; Gubbins and Garavan 2009; Swanson 2001). To be successful, HRD professionals are now required to satisfy the existing demands of multiple stakeholders and predict their future demands (Garavan 2007). They are expected to facilitate change in the process and systems as well as contribute to greater flexibility (Garavan 2007). Developing a global approach is increasingly becoming an important responsibility for which they must make cautious decisions relating to policies and practices that may be local, regional, or even global (Garavan 2007). That said, typically HRD works within national legal and cultural systems and does not often play a transformative role in those systems. For example, in international HRD (Garavan, McCarthy, and Carbery 2019) multinational corporations are influenced by the global HRD ecosystem but they work within those cultural and legal frameworks to achieve their organizational goals. This is in contrast to CD which has goals, for example women or ethnic group empowerment, that may include advocating for national policy change if there are laws in place blocking implementation. While businesses do lobby governments to adjust laws and policies in their favour, it does not occur to the same degree as the influence of international development agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO, and USAID.

Though development literature frequently praises the implications of HRD, limited studies focus on them in development in an inclusive manner (Berman 2015). Berman (2015) emphasized the HRD activities and expertise in a development context and elaborated on their contributions to reinforcing the state institutions and strengthening performance in development backgrounds, which is the underlying perspective of the CD concept. Berman (2015) also claimed that unanticipated political support and corruption are the fundamental causes of poor governance processes and insignificant advancement

of development goals. The solution to this problem, as he mentioned, is the distinctive HRD practices like training that can play a critical role in mitigating corruption (Berman 2015).

However, as the term CD is mostly used by national and international development assistance organizations (Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999) who support local institutions in numerous ways such as developing financial, technical, business, and political skills, and by building human, social, and organizational capital (Baser and Morgan 2008; James and Haily 2007), HRD can be seen as a vital subset or a parallel set of processes in the overarching national development process (Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger 1999). CD has a broader spectrum and hence Lavergne and Saxby (2001) notably stated that it not only involves everything that development agencies usually do, rather all development taking place in the society is in a sense fundamentally about CD. The term development is generic and refers to the capacity of a society to satisfy the demands of different stakeholders in a continuous manner based on whatever resources are available to it (Lavergne and Saxby 2001).

Implications and conclusion

Historically the concept of CD emerged when the conventional form of technical and financial support provided by international development agencies and donors failed to solve the development-related problems and achieve desired outcomes. Early CD practice revealed that merely making financial, physical, and informational resources available cannot resolve complex problems. Rather, it is more imperative in this regard to create a competent workforce that will be directly involved in utilizing these resources. It is evident that unless people have the right knowledge, skills, and abilities, the mere hard forms of aids such as money, infrastructure, or technology will not bring any lasting change and will either be ignored, underused, or abused. The concept of CD has evolved to focus on the same soft aspect that the HRD field is embedded in, which is the assumption that other resources make things *possible*, but it is the people who will make things *happen*. The concept of HRD is undeniably relevant to the central theme and aim of CD given that any long-term development goal can be sustainably attained if the sponsored organization, society and even country can develop the right talent pool through requisite HRD interventions.

This conceptual article demonstrates the increasing overlap of these concepts as CD expands to include training, wellbeing, and workplace skills and HRD widens to include national, regional, and global development. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that both concepts are based in the assumption and value that (a) what a person can do is more important than what a person owns and (b) that capability at the societal level necessarily relates to the capabilities of its individuals. This individual-level capability can be fostered through HRD activities like education, learning, training, and development that eventually facilitate performing the roles and responsibilities more efficiently and achieving long-term development objectives in a sustained manner. From a critical perspective, they must also foster 'holistic, socially conscious economic development' (Collins, Zarestky, and Tkachenko 2017, 244).

This conceptual paper aimed to deal with the complexity and overlap involved in the conceptualization of CD and HRD. The main contribution of this study lies in synthesizing the literature on CD and discussing its relevance and connection with HRD through exploring and comparing these two concepts. Given that there is a lack of theoretical research related to CD as a result of its focus on program evaluation and national development, future research should take the theoretical and empirical grounding of HRD scholarship and build a research agenda that would bolster understanding of CD's theoretical underpinnings and connection to national development. HRD scholars interested in macro perspectives of HRD such as National HRD, Regional HRD, and Global HRD, should consider the role that governments and international development agencies play in facilitating HRD. Future research could seek to further delineate these concepts through empirical research based on emerging economic contexts with an abundance of both forms of development. Additional studies could also conduct cross-case analyses of CD projects to see how HRD mechanisms are employed in those contexts and more precisely compare them with traditional HRD activities in high-income economies. CD and HRD practitioners will also benefit from this article in identifying the core focus of any development goals which are related to workforce development. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, and interventions that seek to build capacity, promote learning, or foster development are necessarily tied to the systems (organizational, political, national, global) in which they are embedded. Thus, it is incumbent on HRD researchers to identify ways they can (a) support CD practitioners in terms of research design and theoretical contributions and (b) learn from CD in terms of facilitating National, Regional, and Global HRD.

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