

## Preface

### **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE IN HRD AND MANAGEMENT**

Scholar-practitioners work in various roles within different types of organizations (for profit and not for profit), and the impact of the organization may determine the effectiveness of the Human Resource Development (HRD) scholar-practitioner. Many aspects of the research literature has been examined within this book to provide a resource for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners to be effective in their respective roles. According to Moran and Brightman (2000), to manage change within organizations, leaders must understand the three most powerful drivers of work behavior: purpose, identity, and mastery in individuals. Leaders of change efforts must inspire individuals to align work behavior components and the environment effectively with the necessary organizational change effort.

The change literature has been reviewed by several authors to add depth to how scholar-practitioners may be able to implement change initiatives that may impact the divide between research and practice within their organization. More research is needed to assess scholar-practitioners' perception of organizational change and how they may act to lead research and practice change efforts within their organizations.

The research versus practice debate has been raging for years with defensible arguments from both sides. Hulin (2001) argued that research does not have to have immediately apparent practical application to be sound for practice. Latham (2001) argued that time was the issue of concern. Authors within this work provide support for both Hulin and Latham, but also provide evidence of how to better align research and practice. More empirical data is needed to support the theories and assess why these barriers and challenges continue to exist despite attempts to bridge the gap by organizations such as Association of Talent Development (ATD) and the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) within the field of HRD (Short, 2006).

There is empirical evidence of how scholar-practitioners identify themselves and are working to close the gap between research and practice; however, not enough empirical evidence is available to make the ideas generalizable across disciplines and organizations. Scholar-practitioners are actively involved in trying to include valid and reliable research within their practice. Additional research findings may provide a foundation for HRD researchers see what other scholars and practitioners are doing with regards to the definition of scholar-practitioner, relationship between research and practice, driving forces, and challenges and barriers that are faced within the field. The chapters in this book provide many theoretical foundations upon which HRD scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners can begin to work together to lessen the divide between research and practice within the HRD discipline.

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The objectives and mission of this book is to 1) expand upon the knowledge base to bridge the gap between research and practice in HRD and 2) to offer researchers ways to further explore effective ways to integrate research into practice and/or align practice with theory.

The scholarly value and potential of this book is vast because currently, there is no clear understanding of the role of the scholar-practitioner in academia or industry. A concise research volume that addresses the past, present, and future implications for how scholar-practitioners can help organizations understand and value the research, theory, and practice is essential.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

Understanding and establishing an agreed upon relationship between theory and practice is a persistent and difficult problem for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners who work in professional schools within various disciplines such as business, engineering, social work, medicine, agriculture, education, public administration, journalism, and law. HRD scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners work within many of these professional schools. These schools typically have a mission of developing knowledge that can be translated into skills that advance the practice of the professions (Kondrat, 1992; Simon, 1976; Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). As evidenced by lamented gap between theory and practice, accomplishing the mission of professional schools remain an elusive ideal.

Several leading academic journals have published special issues that have highlighted the growing concerns that academic research has become less useful for solving practical problems, and the gulf between theory and practice in the professions continues to widen as opposed to contract (Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson, 2001; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001). There is also increasing criticism that findings from academic and consulting studies were not useful to practitioners and were implemented (Beer, 2001; Gibbons et al., 1994; Hughes, Wang, Zheng, McLean, 2010). Academics are also criticized for not adequately putting their research into practice (Beyer & Trice, 1982; Hodgkinson, Herriot, & Anderson, 2001; Hughes & Wang, 2015; Lawler, Mohrman, Morhman, Ledford, & Cummings, 1985). Professional knowledge workers have been criticized for not being aware of relevant research and not doing enough to put their practice into theory (Hughes & Wang 2015; Hughes, Wang, Zheng, McLean, 2010; Van de Ven, 2002; Weick, 2001). Subsequently, organizations cannot learn or implement the learnings fast enough to keep up with the changing times.

Such challenges can be classified into four categories:

- The challenge of solving practical problems by establishing relationships between scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners.
- The challenge of contracting the gulf between theory and practice in the HRD profession.
- The challenge of designing and developing useful and practical academic and consulting studies.
- The challenge of educating practitioners on relevant research and how to translate practice into theory.

## SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION

Solutions to the problem of bridging the scholar-practitioner gap in HRD first begins with recognizing who is a scholar, a practitioner, or a scholar-practitioner in HRD. Understanding how each can add to the knowledge base within the research and practice divide allows for the development of viable solutions to the problem. Relationships cannot be built until each entity in the relationship knows their role. If one entity believes himself to be a scholar, he may not listen to a true scholar who has the expertise to help him expand upon his knowledge base. If one entity believes himself to be a practitioner, he may not listen to a truly experienced practitioner who has experienced a problem that is new to the neophyte practitioner. The same is true for the scholar-practitioner. Once the roles are established, only then can effective relationships can be established between scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioner. Effective relationships that can solve problems that exist within the scholar-practitioner gap requires a focus on the problem itself and not between the entities who are seeking to contract the gulf between their views.

Contracting the gulf between theory and practice in the HRD profession is much more critical to the profession than within some other fields of study because HRD is tasks with helping human resources implement organization strategies (Kuchinke, 2010). HRD professionals must understand theory and practice to accomplish their mission within organizations. HRD professionals lead training and development, career development, organization development initiatives within organizations; thus, there is critical need for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners, to collaborate to solve immediate problems. When the scholar is conducting research, they must be able to depend on practitioners to help them design studies and consulting activities that are practical. The scholar-practitioner must also depend on other scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners to assist in their efforts (Jacobs, 1999).

In the statistical field  $N$  equals 1 is not statistically significant. HRD professionals must embrace the fact that the findings of one scholar, practitioner, or scholar-practitioner is not statistically significant and use that fact to establish reasoning for not depending on the findings of less than 30 scholars, practitioners, and/or scholar-practitioners before gravitating towards a strategy. They must ground their actions in significant findings that are generalizable. They cannot afford to invest the time and effort into establishing a discipline that is recognized for its integrity and grounding within the knowledge-base. This type of effort takes time so HRD scholars must spend the time necessary to complete meta-analysis studies of the current scholarly literature and time series studies of what is available within the practice area. There is vast material awaiting examination by scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners within HRD to contract the gulf between theory and practice.

Having established relationships amongst HRD scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners, it should not be difficult to design and develop useful and practical academic and consulting studies. The onus should not be on the practitioners to help the scholars find out what is practical and useful within the field. Scholars and scholar-practitioners must read the practitioner literature and attend the practitioner meetings to determine what is vital and pertinent within the daily work lives of practitioners. What are the struggles that organization leaders' face as it relates to developing their human resources within the areas of training and development, career development, and organization development? Critical thinking is essential for HRD practitioners, scholars, and scholar-practitioners to be effective in completing useful and practical academic and consulting studies. There is a plethora of information, often referred to as big data, available that must be examined prior designing and developing useful and practical studies. Being able to critically examine this data and communicate the findings from the data is essential;

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thus, analytical skills in statistics and qualitative data analysis should not be optional skills for HRD professionals to attain.

Educating practitioners on relevant research and how to translate practice into theory is essential for HRD scholars and scholar-practitioners to accomplish. Yet, they cannot do this if they were not properly educated themselves. The curriculums vary across HRD depending on the higher education institutions and colleges within which they reside (Kuchinke, 2002; Li, & Nimon, 2009). This is understandable and acceptable; however, the research courses such as statistics, quantitative research, and qualitative research should be taught at all levels. Whether or not the HRD professional has to produce the research or evaluation documents is irrelevant. They must be able to read and comprehend research and evaluation documents to make educated decisions that affects the human resources that they are tasked to train and develop. Providing inaccurate or ineffective information to human resources is inexcusable in today's knowledge age.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK**

The book is organized into ten chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 suggests that HRD should consider itself as a knowledge management system and shows the importance of bridging the scholar-practitioner gap for HRD professionals. Without scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners working together, effectively, transfer of knowledge between scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners will not occur. Research is conducted for multiple purposes, for example, to understand, describe, and explain a phenomenon, to generate core concepts for theory building, and to help guide and improve practice; using logic models to evaluate the effectiveness of HRD's programs and organizations may help bridge the research and practice gap.

Chapter 2 suggests that the quality of human resource is a key driver in creating organizational performance. The author also advocates that the '*HRD Scholar-Practitioner*' opens the ways connecting the division between academics and the real world of practice and sets the scene for a mutually dependent relationship between scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners.

Chapter 3 describes the interplay between theory and practice in HRD from a philosophical examination. The author notes that there is agreement amongst scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners that tension exists between HRD theoreticians and practitioners. He further reveals that there are few models in existence that explain why the tension exists. He uses Gosney's Model of Modern Era Theory & Practice Generation in HRD to begin to describe why the tension exist – suggesting that a review of both the current historical context, capitalism, and the predominant informing philosophy, pragmatism, both theoreticians and practitioners are better equipped to understand and ameliorate the tension. He also recommends a more robust exploration by theoreticians of pragmatism as an informing philosophy in HRD and the adoption of critical thinking as a core competency for practitioners.

Chapter 4 describes how career development models and concepts have been developed over the years to explain career trajectories of employees in the workplace and describes the variety of dynamic careers (boundaryless, protean, kaleidoscope, hybrid and multiple level careers) found within modern workplaces. The author proposes a framework that links career models to specific organizational career development activities to help HRD professionals whose emphasis is on career development better understand career development theory.

Chapter 5 explains the critical role of HRD in helping organizations identify and meet their strategic objectives in today's competitive and ever-changing global. The author draws on strategic HRD (SHRD) and management "line of sight" literature to explore the theoretical conceptualization and model of employee perceptions of the strategic alignment of HRD in their organizations. This may be the first instance of looking at SHRD and SHRM from the employee perspective.

Chapter 6 provides a review of key management frameworks and models to bridge the research practice gap phenomenon. The authors discuss the scholarly literature and review key frameworks and models on the topic by elaborating on three streams of research: the rigor-relevance debate; knowledge creation and transfer; and the role of educational institutions in bridging the gap. They also provide holistic perspectives (engaged scholarship and evidence-based management) on narrowing the research-practice divide.

Chapter 7 discusses evidence-based Organizational Change and Development (OCD) with emphasis on the role of professional partnership and replication research. The chapter is targeted mainly toward HRD practitioners and line managers who are actively involved in bringing about effective and beneficial OCD within their own respective organizations and/or within host organizations. The author discusses why so many OCD programs fail and argues that 'evidence-based management' and 'evidence-based HRD', coupled with HRD's understanding of and alignment with the strategic thrust of the business, will likely lead to more effective OCD initiatives and programs. The author further provides several case examples and describes the merits of 'design science', 'professional partnership research' and 'replication research'.

Chapter 8 describes the prevalence of corporate training programs and the need for trainers to be knowledgeable about available and appropriate education delivery methods. The author suggests that corporate trainers utilize knowledge about advances in the fields of both content and delivery for organizational benefit. She further suggests that as possessors of knowledge from practical implementation HRD professionals can make contributions to the fields. Specifically, she notes that corporate trainers are ideally positioned as practitioner scholars in the workplace and introduces frameworks that indicate how trainers can help bridge the practitioner-scholar gap.

Chapter 9 examines the academic workplace and HRD's potential for creating and maintaining a positive organizational culture and climate during organizational change. The chapter explores the relationships between the shifting landscape of higher education, the corresponding organizational changes that are identified and implemented by college and university leaders in response to those shifts, and workplace culture and climate. A typology of HRD interventions is introduced that respond to organizational needs for skill building and education in order to equip individuals and organizations to thrive during periods of significant change.

Chapter 10 examines employee use value, HRD flexibility, and Human Resource Management (HRM) flexibility. The authors suggest that HR departments examine the development and management of their human resources in the context of the employees' use value within organizations. The chapter further analyzes the concept of use value of the employees within the theoretical and practical applications of HRD and HRM flexibility and provides recommendations for organizations to increase the use value of workers to enhance organization productivity.

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