

SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONERS IN HRD: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RESEARCH-  
PRACTICE INTEGRATION

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Literature in the human resource development (HRD) field identifies a gap between scholars and practitioners. HRD scholar-practitioners can close the gap between research and practice by acting as a bridge between empirical-based HRD research and practice. However, bridging the gap requires scholar-practitioners fulfilling a unique role. Moreover, a preliminary review of the HRD literature shows that little research has been done to explore how HRD scholar-practitioners identify and define their own competencies. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and experiences of research-practice integration.

I employed a qualitative, interpretative research approach to conduct this study. The approach included in-depth interviews with 14 HRD scholar-practitioners in order to better understand their perception on essential competencies and strategies. Participants, identified through criterion sampling, are knowledgeable about and experienced with evidence-based practice. The primary data source for this qualitative study was in-depth interviews with open-ended questions.

The findings of this study provided several implications to HRD research and practice. For practice, universities can use this study's competency framework to guide curriculum development in graduate HRD programs, and companies can provide ongoing professional development to their HRD practitioners on how to create a shared vision focused on evidence-based practice and continuous learning. Future research can employ a case study methodology to explore if HRD scholar-practitioners working in the

same organization possess the same competencies. Future research can also explore contextual factors to better understand the competencies and strategies required to successfully integrate research and practice.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family and many friends. I also extend a special gratitude to my loving mentors, Drs. Punnee Soonthornpocht and Jason Moats, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears and heart. Dr. Soonthornpocht, although you now reside in heaven, your presence remains with me, and you continue to be a very special person in my life. Dr. Moats, even as you currently battle cancer, you continue to believe in me and support me throughout the whole process. You are a strong, humorous, and influential person, and I am sure many people can attest to that. Continue to be strong and be faithful. I have faith that you will beat this cancer and continue to love and inspire others like me.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human resource development (HRD) is a young applied field and therein lies many challenges and opportunities (Ruona & Gilley, 2009). The future of the field relies on HRD professionals who can ensure the most efficient and effective results in order to help organizations gain and sustain competitive advantage. Thus, the field is driven by its organizational actors, both scholars and practitioners alike. Practitioners of the field implement interventions to drive changes and behaviors in individuals and organizations. Scholars, on the other hand, focus on academic research and theory building. Questions regarding the relationship, collaboration, and work of these two groups have gained attention in the HRD literature. Practitioners have been criticized by academics for making little use of academic research to enhance their practice; whereas, scholars are criticized for not producing relevant research. It is therefore not surprising that a gap exists between scholars and practitioners. Criticisms between the two groups demonstrate a gap between research and practice (Kormanik, Lehner, & Winnick, 2009; Moats & McLean, 2009). Based on the literature review, the problem that marks the gap between HRD research and practice is the roles that HRD scholars and practitioners play in the field. As a result, the relationship between HRD research and practice has become a growing point of interest that has produced numerous discussions. Indeed, numerous researchers have attempted to formulate suggestions on how to bridge the gap between scholars and practitioners.

The consensus (e.g., McNatt, Glassman, & Glassman, 2013; Nyilasy & Reid, 2007) seems to be that a scholar/practitioner gap exists and both scholars and practitioners should take the initiative to implement evidence-based practice in their daily work. More specifically, questions concerning the gap between research and practice have raised issues regarding the role of HRD scholar-practitioners. Short (2006) suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners serve as a bridge to the scholar and practitioner divide. As bridge builders, scholar-practitioners can influence the scholarly community to engage in research that is relevant to individual and organizational development. Moreover, scholar-practitioners can influence the practitioner community to value research and theory in their work. Ruona and Gilley (2009) proposed a model in which practitioners work toward becoming an HRD scholar-practitioner, an HRD professional who is highly competent and serves as an expert in the areas of research and practice. Similarly, Kormanik et al. (2009) proposed a preliminary competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. Kormanik et al.'s study motivated this study because work was still needed to develop and refine the competency model they proposed. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and experiences of research-practice integration. The required competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners were still unclear; thus, they were explored more in depth. A basic qualitative research design was used to explore HRD scholar-practitioner perceived competencies and strategies for implementing evidence-based practice.

## **Background of the Study**

Because the field of HRD is young, the future holds numerous challenges for HRD professionals. One void that can be filled is developing a robust competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. HRD scholar-practitioners play an important role in developing the HRD role because they are expected to serve as a bridge between research and practice. The theory-to-practice gap is greatest when discussing “pure scholars” and “pure practitioners” (Kormanik et al., 2009). A pure scholar is someone who focuses primarily on theories but lacks the context in which to employ them. A pure practitioner is someone who focuses mainly on reaching net results, regardless of quality of work produced (Kormanik et al., 2009). Finally, a scholar-practitioner is someone who integrates a practice-theory approach in his or her work (Ruona & Gilley, 2009). Kormanik and Shindell (2009) argued that the HRD field should care about HRD scholar-practitioners because this group understands the value of research and theory in guiding practice and have experienced issues and challenges related to effective HRD practice. Correspondingly, Ruona and Gilley (2009) noted that this group has the ability to bridge the scholar and practitioner divide.

Critics (e.g., McNatt et al., 2013; Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010) of scholar-practitioner gaps suggest greater collaboration between scholars and practitioners as a solution to bridging the gap between them. Practitioners argue that scholars should take the initiative to bridge the gap by making their work more relevant to individual and organizational problems and their written work more accessible to practitioners. Scholars, on the other hand, claim that practitioners make very little use of scholarly

research or have very little skills to use scholarly research. Pure scholars and pure practitioners can work toward becoming an HRD scholar-practitioner (Ruona & Gilley, 2009), plan for HRD education and certification programs, and develop the competencies to act as a channel between research and practice (Kormanik et al., 2009; Short & Shindell, 2009). It is likely that the scholar-practitioner population is small (Short, 2006) relative to the HRD practitioner group. Therefore, formal professional development programs that focuses on turning HRD professionals into competent HRD scholar-practitioners can help build a larger population.

Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) proposed a collaborative effort between scholars and practitioners to meet the needs of both by suggesting that scholar-practitioners act as a channel between empirical-based HRD research and practice (Short, 2006). Moreover, Ruona and Gilley (2009) argued that HRD scholar-practitioners play a unique role in developing the field because they carry on the loads of both scholars and practitioners by “(a) pressing themselves and their organization for increasingly higher quality HRD, and (b) generating rigorous concepts and research” (p. 9). In other words, HRD scholar-practitioners integrate research and theory into their practice. Kormanik et al. (2009) also discussed the important role HRD scholar-practitioners can play in the future development of HRD. They argued that a competency model can contribute to the understanding of HRD scholar-practitioner development because it gives the scholar-practitioner the tools to take responsibility for his or own development. Developing a robust competency model is an issue that has surfaced and been explored, yet, much work is still needed to refine the preliminary competency model that Kormanik et al.

proposed. Exploring how such a model can meet the needs of HRD professionals requires a more robust understanding of competencies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

HRD is a young field that is continuing to develop and define itself. As such, the field faces many challenges. One way in which HRD professionals can address this concern is by preparing future HRD scholar-practitioners to competently deal with diversity, globalization, and technological advancement. Individuals and organizations are profoundly affected by the changing workforce, and improving HRD preparedness is now a priority. Competency models have attracted much attention in large US organizations (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999) because they provide a positive way forward in gaining full operational competencies in different fields. Interest in using competencies as a foundation of human resource practices stems from continued downsizing and loss in profit margins, all of which are influenced by performance. Training and development professionals develop competency models to identify industry and organization-specific competencies for the purpose of improving individual and organizational performance. More specifically, the purpose of competency research and practice is to ensure that organizational members are competent in defining minimum competency standards for each level of operation. Developing individuals in their field of work involves constant examination of required competencies that are necessary to stay competitive (Boyatzis, 1982), yet sustainability of a robust competency model is seldom dealt with explicitly in discussions of plans for future HRD.



The problem with a competency model in HRD research and practice is developing and maintaining a competency model that is specifically for HRD scholar-practitioners. In fact, little research has focused on exploring competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners. Most notable is the work done by Kormanik et al. (2009) who presented a preliminary competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. Kormanik et al. suggested that competent HRD scholar-practitioners demonstrate competency in the job “when their performance consistently embodies the elements of the competency description” (p. 489). Kormanik et al. noted many limitations to their study and suggested that HRD scholars test and refine the HRD scholar-practitioner competency model they developed.

Kormanik et al. (2009) constructed their model using Garavan and McGuire’s (2001) three-step expert panel. The first step involved selecting experts of different occupations. These experts were then asked to identify and prioritize a list of competencies that were relevant to their occupational roles. The final step consisted of compiling the list of competencies to develop the competency model. The data Kormanik et al. collected came from a convenience sample of individuals who attended an academic HRD conference. This is a limitation of the study because participants self-selected and identified themselves as HRD scholars, practitioners, or scholar-practitioners. Another limitation that influenced the study was the method used by Kormanik et al. to develop the competency model. The method they used was positivistic, meaning that participants were asked to choose from a set of predefined competencies.

Kormanik et al. (2009) purposely chose a convenience sample of 113 participants, including 64 HRD professionals and 49 master-level students in HRD courses who were attendees of the Academy of Human Resource Development's (AHRD's) annual conference. The participants self-identified themselves on a continuum of scholar on one end, practitioner on the other end, with scholar-practitioner serving as the middle ground. The self-identified sample included 16.8% scholars, 28% scholar-practitioners, and 55.1% practitioners. These participants were asked to sort out 67 competencies into three categories: (a) essential, (b) nice to have, and (c) not important. Based on the data collected, 16 essential HRD competencies were identified to form Kormanik et al.'s HRD scholar-practitioner competency model. The mean number was 9.98 and the standard deviation was 1.85 for competencies that each participant identified. The findings demonstrated that the 16 identified competencies were favored by a majority of the participants, "indicating strong overall agreement on the value of these general competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners" (Kormanik et al., 2009, p. 495). The results from the chi-square tests also showed consistency across the three groups on these competencies. In other words, the participating scholars, scholar-practitioners, and practitioners all favored the 67 competencies as general competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners.

To help develop more research in this area, HRD scholar-practitioners' competencies was further explored in this study. However, qualitative methods, instead of quantitative, was used to explore HRD scholar-practitioners' perceptions and experiences of research-practice integration. Proponents of qualitative methods

emphasize the naturalistic nature of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), whereas, positivists develop and test hypotheses to discover one objective truth in quantitative studies (Merriam, 2009). This means that qualitative researchers study phenomenon in their natural settings and recognize that there are multiple truths. Kormanik et al. (2009) noted that using a constructivist qualitative method might have resulted in different competencies because participants are able to identify and define their own competencies. Thus, Kormanik et al.'s study can be further elaborated and strengthened through interviews with subject matter experts. In this study, experts who are HRD scholar-practitioners were selected based on a criterion-based sampling. More specifically, each participant was an HRD scholar-practitioner who, according to Short's (2006) definition, (a) contributes to research and practice through his or her own research findings, (b) is active in his or her field of work, and (c) has at least five years of work experience.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This study was an attempt to broaden the boundaries of HRD to encompass HRD scholar-practitioners in both academia and corporate settings. Using contingency theory as a guiding framework, the goal was to develop a competency model that can be used for benchmarking and evaluating HRD scholar-practitioners. Specifically, the study explored HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and experiences of research-practice integration using a qualitative interpretative approach. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What competencies do HRD scholar-practitioners consider essential to integrating research and practice?
2. What experiences do HRD scholar-practitioners have in integrating research and practice?
3. What strategies do HRD scholar-practitioners use in integrating research and practice?

This study is significant as my review of the HRD literature shows that little research has been done to explore HRD scholar-practitioners' perceptions and experiences of research-practice integration. Furthermore, there is an unclear understanding of what core competencies are essential for HRD scholar-practitioners to be successful in bridging the research-practice gap.

### **Theoretical Context**

The theoretical framework that informed this study is contingency theory. Contingency theory states that performance is believed to occur when the individuals' capabilities are aligned with the needs of the job and the environment in which the organization is embedded (Boyatzis, 2009; Ruckert, Walker, & Roering, 1985). Contingency scholars (Van de Van & Drazin, 1984) worked to identify a match between the characteristics of an organization and the environment that leads to effective performance. Van de Van and Drazin (1984) called this match "fit," and the better the fit, the superior the performance. Contingency theory can be applied to competency development (Boyatzis, 2009). Given the concept of organizational fit, the connection between performance and internal and external factors can be characterized in terms of

competencies. Notably, Boyatzis (1982) claimed that competency and traits such as personality and intelligence, affect performance depending on the job function and organization. Changing environmental and organizational contexts have an important impact on the demonstration of competencies (Boyatzis, 2009). Boyatzis (2009) argued that maximum performance can occur when an individual's competencies are aligned with the job demands and the organizational environment. This study contributes to building theory on competency development based on contingency perspectives, which take into consideration individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics that influence effective performance.

### **Significance of the Study**

Based on the literature review, much of what HRD scholar-practitioners are expected to do is to act as a bridge between research and practice, serve as role models, and work as facilitators. However, while the discourse and expectations are important, there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that HRD scholar-practitioners are competent in dealing with the work and challenges ahead of them. Competency models are important tools for performance and other features of HRD. Kormanik et al. (2009) presented a preliminary general competency model that provided a foundation for HRD scholar-practitioners to develop the required knowledge, skills, abilities, and other necessary characteristics needed to excel in their job performance. However, work is still needed to refine the model. This study is an attempt to do just that, by improving Kormanik et al.'s general competency model using a qualitative, as opposed to

quantitative, approach to explore required competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners.

This study promises to add to the HRD literature by providing a refined competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. Little empirical evidence currently exists to shed light on competencies from an HRD scholar-practitioner perspective, in spite of the fact that HRD scholar-practitioners play an important role in the HRD field, influencing individual and organizational performance (Kormanik et al., 2009; Ruona & Gilley, 2009; Short, 2006; Short & Shindell, 2009). Thus, Kormanik et al.'s (2009) competency model will be refined using a collective case study approach that allows the researcher to explore perceived competencies through the experiences of multiple individuals within a bounded system (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). More concisely, the study provides both practical and theoretical contributions to the HRD field by exploring HRD scholar-practitioner competencies in the real-world context.

Competency models provide valuable information for HRD scholars and practitioners to plan their professional development. This study enhanced the understanding of HRD scholar-practitioner competencies and addressed the concern that more research is needed about competencies in evidence-based practice (Kormanik et al., 2009; Ruona & Gilley, 2009; Short & Shindell, 2009). Finally, in regard to theoretical significance, this study adds to the general literature related to competency models by exploring competency development from a theoretical perspective using contingency theory.

## Definitions

Any discussion of HRD scholar-practitioners and their association with competencies must begin with the careful definitions of critical terms. The following terms have been used in many research studies and are important in understanding competency research and practice. Definitions of these major constructs and terms are provided below to ensure that the reader is familiar with the terms and their appropriate usage.

- **HRD scholars:** HRD scholars are the scientists, researchers, theorists, and historians who make up a group of HRD professionals (Short, 2006).
- **HRD practitioners:** HRD practitioners are those who “spend much of their time conducting workshops, seminars, meetings, and conferences and designing classroom-based training events” (Gilley, 2006, p. 235). More generally, HRD practitioners’ responsibilities lie in “planning, implementation, and evaluation of HRD activities” (Valkeavaara, 1998, p. 173).
- **HRD scholar-practitioners:** Specifically for this study, HRD scholar-practitioners are those who have relationships and credibility in both the scholar and practitioner communities. They leverage information among scholars and practitioners so that they can offer ideas and options. They engage in self-reflection and continuous learning to develop competencies and utilize strategies needed to effectively implement evidence-based practice.

- **Job:** A job is defined as the sum total of roles and responsibilities that employees are expected to perform and produce (Boyatzis, 1982).
- **Competency:** Competency is a capability or ability, a characteristic of a person that leads to effective performance (Boyatzis, 1982; McClelland, 1974).
- **Job competency:** Job competency is “an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job...characteristics may include “motive, trait, skill, aspect of one’s self-image or social role, or body of knowledge which he or she uses” (Boyatzis, 1982, p. 21).
- **Core competency:** Define as an organization’s collective knowledge and learning (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).
- **Competency model:** The competency model involves identifying the competencies needed to perform effectively a role in an organization (Naquin & Holton, 2006).

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I introduces the topic, provides background information, identifies the problem, describes the significance of the study, and presents the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter II provides an overview of the literature review, including a review of HRD scholars and practitioners, the research and practice gap, HRD scholar-practitioners, competency models, and the contingency theory used to inform the study. Chapter III describes the research methodology used



for the study, including research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV reports the findings of the study. Chapter V discusses the findings, draws on conclusions based on the findings, deliberates limitations, and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a preliminary review of the literature related to competency models of scholar-practitioners in an HRD context. This chapter is organized around three bodies of literature: HRD scholar-practitioner, competency modeling, and the contingency theory as guiding theoretical framework.

#### **HRD Scholar-Practitioners**

Since the 20th century, there has been a growing trend within the HRD field to examine scholar-practitioners' roles, gaps, and responsibilities (Gilley, 2006; Kormanik et al., 2009; Short, 2006). However, little research has been done to examine core competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners. The literature review shows the growing concern about the different roles assumed by HRD scholars and practitioners, and concern about how competent HRD scholar-practitioners can address the gaps between pure scholars and pure practitioners.

#### **An Overview of HRD**

HRD has long been considered a young, applied field. As a starting point, Swanson and Holton (2009) defined HRD as “a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance” (p. 4). However, no single conceptual meaning or definitive view of HRD exists. For this reason, how to define and set boundaries for the field of HRD continues to be discussed (McGuire & Cseh, 2006). As HRD

professionals work to develop and establish the field, issues of identifying a good, solid theoretical foundation continue to spur dialogue and discussion. The young profession carries on with shaping its identity and developing ways to mobilize career development, training and development, and organization development in workplaces that are conducive to lifelong learning and improvement.

The absence of a clear definition of HRD has resulted in a wide diversity of perspectives regarding the precise functions and activities of the HRD field. Consequently, scholars and practitioners use different definitions, models, and interpretations to discuss HRD. Chalofsky (1992) presented a historical overview of HRD definitions that were put forth in the HRD literature. Based on his literature review, he was able to propose a unified definition that captured common themes and characteristics. Chalofsky defined HRD as “the study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, collectives, and organizations through the development and application of learning-based interventions for the purpose of optimizing human and organizational growth and effectiveness” (p. 179). In contrast, McLean and McLean (2001) argued that the issue of defining HRD is complex because no one individual or organization owns the field. Similarly, Lee (2001) stated that individuals have different experiences, and, will perceive and practice HRD differently; therefore, HRD should not be defined because it limits the purpose of the field. Swanson (2001) used economic, system, and psychological theories to discuss HRD and argued that the young profession needs a solid foundation to carry out its process and roles. Calls for rubrics (Ruona, 2002) and an impressionistic framework (Callahan &

Davila, 2004) also made their ways into current dialogue concerning the functions and definitions of HRD.

Although HRD is still in the process of establishing its identity and searching for its definition, academic research has made a significant impact on the profession's growth. More specifically, discussions of HRD definitions, theories, and the overall field shed light on processes and activities that are designed to facilitate individual and organizational learning and development. Consequently, it is not surprising to note the implicit and explicit inclusions of the three foundations of HRD: training and development, organization development, and career development. Training and development looks at the need to continuously learn new competencies for current and futures job tasks (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Organization development recognizes that change in organization is inevitable, hence the need for interventions to manage change and achieve organizational goals (McLean, 2009; Werner & DeSimone, 2012). The career development aspect of HRD recognizes that people have unlimited capacity to learn, grow, and improve their knowledge and performance. Career development focuses on the actions of individuals and organizations in career planning and management (Werner & DeSimone, 2012).

The essence of why HRD exists as an applied profession provides the foundation for HRD research and practice. As a young field, HRD has encountered many future challenges. One challenge is lessening the controversies over the identity of HRD (Hamlin & Steward, 2011). Callahan (2007) posited that HRD should remain acutely mindful of challenging “the dominant forms of practice that are easy and taken-for-

granted” (p. 80). Another challenge is bridging the gap between research and practice (Short, 2006). Whatever the challenge may be, HRD as a field and an organizational function continues to play an important role in the global and dynamic world. HRD professionals are responsible for developing key competencies in order to enable individuals to achieve superior performance so that organizations can keep pace in the constant, changing global market.

### **The Development of the Scholar-Practitioner Model in the History of HRD**

The importance Short (2006) attached to the scholar-practitioner model has been reflected in various studies and texts, and there appears to be a consensus that a gap exists between scholars and practitioners. For the past several years, HRD professionals have debated between following the direction of pure scholars or pure practitioners (Kormanik et al., 2009). The debate will continue until researchers address the issues of differences between the two groups and determine how HRD scholar-practitioners can be the bridge in closing the gap (Short, 2006). Before discussing HRD scholar-practitioners, we need to understand whom the HRD practitioner and HRD scholars are. Doing so will help us understand why Short (2006) proposed the HRD scholar-practitioner bridge to close the gap between scholars and practitioners.

### **HRD Practitioners**

HRD is a practical field that is driven by its interventions to develop individuals and organizations (Ruona & Gilley, 2009). More specifically, HRD practitioners have gained significant importance in changing work organizations. They are increasingly expected to add value to individual and organizational development. This calls for the

need to align HRD interventions with the organization's strategic vision and goals (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). At the same time, HRD practitioners are required to solve challenging issues such as employee engagement and change initiatives. These expectations of HRD practitioners have many implications for their work and the HRD field.

First, HRD practitioners are faced with more challenging problems, such as change initiatives and knowledge sharing than just concentrating on training activities (Valkeavaara, 1998). These challenges require them to obtain and use the information beneficial to the organization's strategic vision. Furthermore, HRD practitioners are required to respond efficiently and effectively to stakeholder's needs. This entails recognizing their stakeholders, understanding the stakeholders' needs, and finding the best intervention to satisfy the stakeholders (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). Finally, HRD practitioners are expected to play many roles and wear many hats in the organization. The HRD practitioner is seen as a "learning agent, change agent, internal consultant, performance engineer, and HRD manager" (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005, p. 191). Each of these roles illuminates the importance of competencies in HRD practitioners' work. In terms of competence, HRD practitioners can develop themselves by constructing their knowledge, skills, and abilities in continuous interaction with their work context (Valkeavaara, 1998). Knowing what HRD practitioners' roles are will help one understand how competencies affect their roles and responsibilities.

There are many viewpoints on the role of HRD practitioners. Organizations, fields, and HRD practitioners themselves all have input on their roles and responsibilities

in individual and organizational development. According to Gilley (2006), HRD practitioners are those who “spend much of their time conducting workshops, seminars, meetings, and conferences and designing classroom-based training events” (p. 235). More generally, HRD practitioners’ responsibilities lie in “planning, implementation, and evaluation of HRD activities” (Valkeavaara, 1998, p. 173).

Ruona and Gilley (2009) proposed four types of practitioners in their HRD practitioner model:

- A theoretical practitioner is an individual “novice with little grounding in theory, perhaps no relevant education credentials, and no affiliation with professional affiliations” (p. 442). In other words, theoretical practitioners lack the knowledge and skills to interpret and utilize scholarly resources in their practical work. They spend little time in research and applying theories in their practice. They, in essence, take on roles that are beyond their competency level.
- Practitioners are those who “meet minimum standards of the profession” (p. 443). Practitioners recognize that they have to engage in continuous learning to develop the ability to apply learning principles in complex situations. They are more competent than theoretical practitioners in the sense that they focus on the knowledge and skills needed to effectively carry out HRD interventions.
- Reflective practitioners are those who “meet the standards of the practitioner, but also critically reflect on their practice and use theory and research as a

basis for improvement of their practice” (p. 444). Additionally, as the name implies, reflective practitioners rely on self-reflection to aid them in identifying strengths and weaknesses. In this process, they are able to challenge their actions and beliefs and piece together the many factors that impact their work.

- Scholar-practitioners are individuals who have acquired the competencies of practitioners and reflective practitioners, and integrate a “practice-theory approach” (p. 446) in their work. In fact, their expert knowledge of the profession and their deep understanding of the practical world are what separate them from the other types of practitioners. Scholar-practitioners know that they have to contribute to research and theory building to enhance their work. More importantly, they understand the importance of knowledge sharing and serve mentors, teachers, and publishers.

Ruona and Gilley (2009) offered detailed information through their definitions of these four types of practitioners. The classification of practitioners illustrates the significance of roles, responsibilities, and competencies in HRD professionals’ work. Additionally, the model outlines stages of professional development that HRD practitioners can learn and master. This is the case with competencies. Clardy (2008) emphasized the importance of competencies in an organization’s competitive advantage gained from HRD practitioners’ knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). The competency construct reminds us of the importance of different roles of HRD practitioners. That being said, “pure practitioners” or “traditional practitioners” as



argued by Ruona and Gilley (2009) can excel in HRD roles if they apply research and theories in their work. Scholarly work is just as important and the next section explores this scholarly element by examining who HRD scholars are, what they do, and what their essential role is in HRD.

### **HRD Scholars**

The difference between HRD practitioners and HRD scholars may be found in the beliefs these two groups hold about the field and their work (Gilley, 2006). In fact, HRD scholars believe that HRD practitioners should ground their work in theory and research. At the same time, theory and research can be out of touch if not rigorously tested by the realities of daily practice. If scholars' work cannot hold up to the complexity of the global workforce, then it holds little to no values in academic research and journals (Wimbiscus, 1995). For this reason, scholars play an important role in the HRD field because their theories and research help improve interventions that practitioners use in individual and organization development (Short, 2006).

Because scholars are scientists, researchers, theorists, and historians who make up the group of HRD scholar professionals, Short (2006) recognized the importance of getting to know this group of professionals on a personal level. Therefore, he interviewed several renowned HRD scholars including Vernal Willis, Gary McLean, John Bing, Monica Lee, Robert Hamlin, and Karen Watkins. Through these interviews, Short (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c) gained a deep insight into their life story, career journey, and passion, and how these factors played a role in their scholarly

work. More in-depth descriptions of the HRD scholars' life histories, works, and contributions to the HRD field can be found in Short's publication.

The HRD scholars interviewed by Short (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), Willis, McLean, Bing, Lee, Hamlin, and Watkins, fit Wimbiscus' (1995) definition of scholars because they meet the following criteria: (a) has made a significant scholarly contribution that adds to the understanding of HRD; (b) supports his or her theory with sound research and scholarly publications; and (c) is recognizable to the scholarly community. These scholars have contributed volumes of research and studies dedicated to improving individuals, processes, and organizations. Short (2006) pointed out that knowing the HRD scholars, their passion for the field, the significance of life influences, and how life experiences play a role in their HRD scholarly success increases one's understanding of the HRD scholar's purpose. These HRD scholars varied life history and influences shaped their experiences which in turn shaped their works.

### **Scholar-Practitioner Gap: The Great Debate**

There have been several discussions about scholar-practitioner relationships that focus on the gap between theory and practice, researchers and practitioners, or similar terms. The primary focus has been on bridging the gap between scholars and practitioners. Bartunek and Rynes (2014) found that articles addressing the gap between scholar and practitioners have increased significantly since 2000; however, 87% of the publications are non-empirical. They called for more empirical studies to be conducted

to strengthen the arguments of academia about these gaps. In fact, Kezar's (2000) study showed that there is very little empirical evidence to illuminate that such gaps truly exist.

**The gap.** The gap between research and practice is well recognized. Many scholars (e.g., McNatt et al., 2013; Nyilasy & Reid, 2007) lamented how the relationship between academics and practitioners is a continuing source of concern for both sides. According to this view, while scholars add to the body of theoretical knowledge, practitioners do not seem connected to this information. Each side complains about the insignificance of the other side's work and points to gaps that separate them. The scholar-practitioner divide brings to the forefront the issue that the literature raises, that is, much of the learned theories and articles written by academicians are irrelevant to business.

Several studies have acknowledged that scholars and management practitioners have different ways and interest of carrying out their work. Specifically, the gap is seen in terms of communicating (Nyilasy & Reid, 2007) and transferring knowledge (Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan, & Wornham, 2011) into the workplace. For this reason, it is not surprising that scholars have been criticized by practitioners for studying topics that are of little interest and relevance. On the other hand, scholar critics point to the fact that practitioners do not take the time to read journal articles and do not use scholarly information even if it is practical to them (Nyilasy & Reid, 2007).

In the context of academia, knowledge developed by scholars tends to be disseminated to the field through scholarly journals or academic conferences. Nyilasy and Reid (2007) argued that this "academic knowledge distribution system" needs to

improve in order for the scholar-practitioner gap to be resolved (p. 428). Similarly, criticism points out that academic works are difficult to read and follow. One reason is that scholars are not familiar with practitioners' jargons. Another cause is that academic researchers are unfamiliar with the problems businesses face, making the research and writing irrelevant to the work of practitioners. Nyilasy and Reid (2007) noted that the problem is that scholars are unable to identify research topics that are important to specific organizations or industries. Different authors (Hughes et al., 2011; McNatt et al., 2013) suggested that more practitioner input and managerial involvement are needed to resolve these issues.

In the case of practitioners, Vanderlinde and Braak (2010) argued that practitioners are the ones to blame for the scholar-practitioners divide. These critics pointed to the fact that practitioners do not use scholarly findings and results even when the information is useful to them. Vanderlinde and Braak explained that practitioners are unwilling to use academic information because they do not trust and believe that scholars' work can solve their real-world problem. In fact, practitioners argue that scholarly work is usually generalized and thus, not suitable for solving business or industry-specific problems.

**Closing the gap.** This scholar-practitioner gap continues to receive considerable attention. However, there is no consensus on how the gap can be closed. McNatt et al. (2013) believed that the gap cannot be closed while scholars and practitioners adhere to different views of the management world. That is, the two groups "ask different questions, use different methodologies to answer those questions, and generate answers

that are often irrelevant to the other party” (McNatt et al., 2013, p. 102). Furthermore, Wood (1988) argued that closing the gap between scholars and practitioners poses a challenge for both parties. A major challenge for scholars is to adhere to academic standards while producing research that is relevant to practitioners. On the other hand, a challenge for practitioners is to use academic theories and findings in their work, which can be difficult for those who do not have research or scholarly backgrounds.

To close the scholar-practitioner gaps, researchers (e.g., Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010) offered some specific suggestions to enhance communication between scholar-practitioners. Collaboration between the two groups is important to determine what is relevant in the practical world. In this case, both sides should seek opportunities to create partnerships. Practitioners are the ultimate consumers of learning, action, and decision models; for this reason, they need to see the potential benefits of the scholar-practitioner collaboration. If the scholar-practitioner collaboration is successful, there will be greater visibility regarding the practicality of academic models and theories.

A second suggestion is to translate academic jargon into business language that practitioners can understand (McNatt et al., 2013; Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010). Practitioners, particularly managers, will not use concepts or models they do not understand. Scholars use academic language and practitioners use industry jargon when they communicate. Educating one another by documenting the value of training and learning can help close the scholar-practitioner gap. If possible, have facilitators who can speak the language of both parties can help with the communication problems. These facilitators should be able to recognize and describe a practical situation in such a

way that researchers can identify concepts or theories to understand and solve the problems. The facilitators should also be competent in translating the results of research into practice for practitioners.

Finally, it is important to move past the socially constructed views both groups have of each other by building trust. Greater exposure on the part of scholars to practitioners and the work conditions they face on a daily basis can add value to research findings and theory development (McNatt et al., 2013). This exposure in turn provides more practical models that practitioners can use in real-world settings. Similarly, scholars should derive research questions from a practical field instead of from peers (Wood, 1988).

**The unbridgeable gap.** While many authors discussed about the scholar-practitioner divide and suggested ways to bridge the gaps, Kieser and Leiner (2009) argued that the scholar-practitioner gap is unbridgeable due to the fact that the two groups operate in different systems. The gap has to do with different languages and different logics. In terms of language, communication between the two groups can be unproductive when practitioners are not familiar with research methods and academic jargons. Kieser and Leiner further stated that translating academic results into practical language will “inevitably produce different stories” (p. 517). Additionally, scholars and practitioners also operate in different institutional logics as a result they define and tackle problems differently. These arguments show that communication and collaboration may not be very effective in closing the scholar-practitioner gap. For

Kieser and Leiner, attempts to bridge the scholar-practitioner gap are viewed as inevitably unsuccessful.

Fincham and Clark (2009) supported Kieser and Leiner's (2009) argument by suggesting that the scholar-practitioner systems should remain distinct. They echoed Kieser and Leiner's belief that doing so will allow the two groups to freely experiment with new ideas because they are not dependent on corporate goals or university interests. The languages adopted by the two groups have their own dynamics, with each focusing on different problems. Fincham and Clark took a broader approach by suggesting that there are no right answers or design solutions to the scholar-practitioner divide. Instead of conceptualizing rigid roles for the two groups, recognizing the reality as complex seems more reasonable. Fincham and Clark discussed the multiple roles that scholars and practitioners can play, arguing that some successful managers or practitioners were once or are still academically involved.

While Kieser and Leiner (2009) and Fincham and Clark (2009) suggested the gap is unbridgeable, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) took a more bellicose approach. They argued that the attempt to resolve the gap can be contradicting. Multiple efforts have been put forth to lessen the gap between scholars and practitioners, yet, there are still debates on whether the problem has increased or decreased. Instead, they suggested a different approach that treats the scholar-practitioner divide as fundamentally important in itself for academic research. In other words, they suggested moving beyond discussing the gap to appreciating the importance of the gap in providing tension between the two groups for scholarly purposes. Scholar-practitioner researchers should

not try to close the gap, instead they should try to understand the tension between the two groups. Bartunek and Rynes posited that doing so would open opportunities for scholars to reflect on the tension and consider the need to “maintain the appropriate degree of tension” (p. 15) as opposed to unsuccessfully trying to resolve the gap.

Bartunek and Rynes (2014) claimed that the literature is highly critical of the scholar-practitioner gap, but only a small percentage of the literature (13%) consists of empirical studies. The majority of articles are essays, which consist mainly of subjective statements. They also pointed out another important characteristic of the literature, that is, the debate over the scholar-practitioner gaps was mostly aimed at the scholars (i.e., Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010) rather than the practitioners. To partly remedy the lack of attention to practitioner contribution and perspectives, they laid out a conceptual foundation to be used in future research that takes attention away from discussing the gaps to appreciating the dichotomies between scholars and practitioners. Below are several tensions that Bartunek and Rynes discussed regarding the scholar-practitioner gap.

***Differing logics.*** Scholars and practitioners define and tackle problems differently. Although scholars seek to define their research questions from literature reviews, practitioners are driven by logic that is gained from day-to-day activities. The tension over methodologies used in defining and solving problems vary, consequently causes further frictions between the two groups (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014).

***Time dimensions.*** Bartunek and Rynes (2014) suggested that time dimensions between scholars and practitioners differ. In other words, academics’ output timelines



may be longer than practitioners' timelines because high-quality research needs sufficient time to complete. This can be a problem for practitioners where managers allot a certain amount of time to deal with problems and issues. Although different time constraints may hold true, Bartunek and Rynes stated that a different perspective can be taken; that is, the time that scholars and practitioners spend together can be used to develop relationships which in turn can help foster "insightful and impactful" research (p. 5).

***Communication practices.*** The literature shows multiple communication issues between scholars and practitioners. The issues are due in part to the different vernaculars that the two groups use. For instance, academic language may not have a practical sense, whereas business jargon may not communicate well with scholars. There is, however, successful communication when practitioners take the time to assist scholars in interpreting their findings. Bartunek and Rynes (2014) suggested that a scholar's main priority is to help practitioners distinguish between good and bad data.

***Rigor and relevance.*** Bartunek and Rynes (2014) noted that the bulk of the literature focuses on the practical relevance versus the rigor of scholarly work. They argued that emphasizing relevance can interfere with quality research because scholars are often criticized for focusing more on rigor than relevance. Bartunek and Rynes suggested that rigor and relevance can go hand-in-hand. They can complement each other, and scholars and practitioners who do not attempt to accomplish both can harm both research and practice.

Bartunek and Rynes' (2014) presentation of tension contributed to the incompatibility debate of scholars and practitioners. In a broader sense, Bartunek and Rynes suggested moving past the idea of the scholar-practitioner divide by discussing how the tension between the two groups can be managed. Whether one sees the scholar-practitioner relationship as a gap to be bridged or a tension to be managed, much work is still needed to reach a consensus because a review of the literature shows that a consensus has not been made on academia and practice compatibility. Moreover, the scholar-practitioner divide seems to be a concern in several fields. Numerous authors have written about the scholar-practitioner gaps in their field. Hodgkinson and Rousseau (2009) maintained that the scholar-practitioner gap in the management field is fundamentally bridgeable and it is already happening. Nyilasy and Reid (2007) and Lilien (2011) observed that advertising scholars and advertising practitioners live in two separate worlds. Clearly, the HRD field is not alone in discussing the scholar-practitioner gap. Short (2006), however, uniquely proposed that HRD scholar-practitioners can serve as a bridge in closing the gap between HRD scholars and HRD practitioners.

### **HRD Scholar-Practitioners**

According to Short and Shindell (2009), HRD scholar-practitioners operate as a bridge between HRD research and HRD practice to improve the understanding and practice of HRD. They ground their practice in research and theory, they are champions of research and theory in the workplace and in professional associations, they conduct research, and they

disseminate findings from their own research and practice. In doing these, they are partners with academics and practitioners alike. (p. 478)

In their influential study published in *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, Short and Shindell (2009) discussed whom HRD scholar-practitioners are and what role they can play in closing the gap between research and practice. They suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners can distinguish themselves from others in the field by demonstrating behaviors specified in the definition. If, as argued by Short and Shindell (2009) and Kormanik and Shindell (2009), HRD scholar-practitioners have a central role in improving the HRD field, there are concerns for recognizing the roles they carry and the competencies needed to successfully carry out those roles. In the context of HRD practice, strategies and interventions should be about leading and managing individuals and organizations through change. Therefore, HRD scholar-practitioners should be competent in carrying training and development, organization development, and career development work in both research and practice. Critics (e.g., Gilley, 2006; Kormanik et al., 2009; Short, 2006) believed that HRD scholar-practitioners can provide important implications for future research and practice.

The existence of the scholar-practitioner gap is readily discussed in the HRD literature (Keefer & Stone, 2009; Short, 2006). Most scholars define the gap as a research-to-practice problem (Gilley, 2006; Short, 2006), while others view it as a collaboration issue (Gray, Iles, & Watson, 2011; Short, Keefer, & Stone, 2009). According to these views, while scholars add to theory and research, practitioners do not seem connected to either one. While few scholars question the existence of the gap

(Keefer & Stone, 2009; Tyler, 2009), they offer different explanations, and consequently suggest different solutions.

For example, Gilley (2006) suggested that because HRD is an applied field, “leading the HRD profession through research” is the mission (p. 243). Consequently, the profession needs HRD scholars and practitioners who are research-minded and embrace research as part of their work. Research should not keep scholars and practitioners apart; instead, research should be practiced and applied in all HRD work because doing so will improve credibility in all aspects of professional positions. However, Short (2006) reminded us that quite a bit of work still needs to be done to ensure that research is valued and carried out in all HRD work. He said that realizing and accepting the ideal of theory to practice is a significant challenge for the HRD field.

In response to the call for closing the HRD scholar and practitioner gap, several suggestions have been given and steps have been taken. For instance, Moats and McLean (2009) suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners can bridge the research and practice gap by working as effective interpreters for scholars and practitioners. As interpreters, HRD scholar-practitioners must develop relationships between the two groups because doing so can provide for a meaningful collaboration and dissemination of knowledge. Keefer and Stone (2009) considered the gap to be an awareness problem. They learned from their research findings that practitioners are unaware of the research-practice gap. In fact, the HRD practitioners Keefer and Stone interviewed were rather happy with their work and the research-practice gap did not affect them. One conclusion can be drawn from the claims that language or awareness problems are causes of the

scholar-practitioner gap; HRD scholar-practitioners must serve as a bridge across the scholar-practitioner divide. Therefore, understanding the exact role of an HRD scholar-practitioner and their competencies is crucial to increasing their contribution.

**Being an HRD scholar-practitioner.** Short and Shindell's (2009) article, *Defining HRD Scholar-Practitioners*, best describes the role of HRD scholar-practitioners. The article suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners are distinguished by their work within the four major themes described in the definition in the HRD Practitioners section above. They argued that for the above definition to be useful to the HRD field, it must distinguish scholar-practitioners from other scholars and practitioners within the field. First, HRD scholar-practitioners "ground their practice in research and theory" (p. 4). HRD practitioners have been criticized for ignoring academic research. HRD scholar-practitioners can separate themselves from practitioners because they accept that academic research contains knowledge that is relevant and actionable to them. For example, they adopt an evidence-based orientation (Hamlin, 2007) by making academic theory and research foundations to their work. Second, Short and Shindell (2009) noted that the scholar-practitioners "champion research and theory in the workplace" (p. 4). They value research and theory and influence others to do the same. Third, according to Short and Shindell, HRD scholar-practitioners "conduct and disseminate research, and partner with academic researchers" (p. 5). They learn and disseminate knowledge that is relevant to individual and organizational needs. To achieve this, they contribute to the HRD literature by testing theories and providing answers. Finally, they "act as a bridge between research and practice in seeking the

further development of the field of HRD” (Short & Shindell, 2009, p. 6). By acting as a bridge between research and practice, HRD scholar-practitioners conduct research that is relevant to practitioners. They also influence practitioners to adopt the evidence-based orientation and apply it in their work.

When discussing evidence-based practice, Ruona and Gilley (2009) proposed a model of four different types of practitioners, with the hope that the model provides a way to HRD in such a manner that theory and evidence-based practices are valued in the field. More specifically, the model describes four types of practitioners: atheoretical practitioners, practitioners, reflective practitioners, and scholar-practitioners. The model provides an explanation of competencies that must be practiced and mastered. HRD professionals can use the model to plan their development toward being an HRD scholar-practitioner. This model can be used in both academia, professional organizations, and other applied fields in order to identify competencies required of its professionals. As a complement to this idea, Gilley (2006) noted that the more HRD practitioners convert to scholar-practitioners, the more the field can influence practice and outcomes with research.

Although the HRD literature (e.g., Ruona & Gilley, 2009; Short, 2006) points to the importance of HRD scholar-practitioners in bridging the research and practice gap, few empirical studies have been conducted to prove that the gap is valid. There are notable suggestions that HRD scholar-practitioners serve as a bridge between research and practice (Short, 2006), that HRD scholar-practitioners integrate a research-practice approach in their work (Ruona & Gilley, 2009; Short & Shindell, 2009), and that HRD

scholar-practitioners collaborate with other HRD professionals and stakeholders to gain and disseminate knowledge (Short et al., 2009). However, none of these articles provided any specific empirical data to support their work (Banks, Wang, Zheng, & McLean, 2010). Banks et al. (2010) conducted an empirical study to validate the definition and description of these professionals. Their study consisted of seven scholar-practitioners who were interviewed for their perceptions on the roles, gaps, and actions related to research and practice. Their findings show that although there are challenges in connecting research and practice, according to the HRD scholar-practitioners there are still opportunities. They learned from the specific interviews that these HRD scholar-practitioners are working to close the gap between research and practice by including research in their practice.

There is no doubt that HRD scholar-practitioners carry important roles in bridging the theory-practice gap. Kormanik and Shindell (2009) argued that the HRD field should care about HRD scholar-practitioners because they (a) understand the value of research in guiding and informing practice, (b) have experienced issues and challenges related to effective HRD practice, and (c) have the ability to bridge the scholar and practitioner gap. Correspondingly, critics (e.g., Gray et al., 2011; Short & Shindell, 2009) of the scholar-practitioner gap suggested greater collaboration between scholars and practitioners as a solution. They provided specific examples of what is involved in bridging such gap by addressing research and practice needs through HRD scholar-practitioners.

**Being a competent HRD scholar-practitioner.** The goal of any HRD professional is to work toward becoming an HRD scholar-practitioner (Gilley, 2006; Ruona & Gilley, 2009). Once an HRD scholar-practitioner, the scholar-practitioner's goal then is to lead the HRD field in its search toward excellence. Consequently, HRD professionals have a great deal of work to do because they have the responsibility for their own development. Competencies are tools to guide individuals' developmental process; and used to determine if mastery has occurred. In the case of HRD scholar-practitioners, Kormanik et al. (2009) suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners need a competency model to follow and use as a checklist for personal development. Competency models provide consistent criteria for HRD scholar-practitioners decisions. A key competency of an HRD scholar-practitioner is applying theory to practice. Integrating that competency with broader organization analysis and development can empower HRD scholar-practitioners.

### **Competency Modeling**

There is intense competition in the globalized economy for talented human resources. The ability to remain competitive depends on management and leadership continuing to focus on reducing unit costs and improving efficiency. Competency-based human resources play an important role in organizations' competitive positions. Further, competency-based human resources have received a great deal of attention because they have replaced job analysis in recruiting and developing individuals (Boyatzis, 2009; Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory, & Gowing, 2002). The use of competency-based human resources, instead of job analysis, in organization's strategic plans has resulted in



numerous published works on how competency should be defined and practiced in learning and performance. Since competency is related to human development, organizations are implementing competency-based programs for individuals' career and training development (Rodriguez et al., 2002). In these programs, learning activities can be developed, implemented, and evaluated with the goal of assisting employees in acquiring the competencies they need to successfully perform in their field of work.

Job analysis and descriptions have served as bases for recruiting and compensation. Competency-based human resources have been used to replace job analysis because organizations have recognized the value of the cluster of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Boyatzis, 2009). The core competence concept correlates with performance on the job (Hafeez, Zhang, & Malak, 2002). Competencies can be developed, but require the appropriate learning activities centered on performance. Throughout the years, competency-based practices have proved to be critical to the effectiveness of both individual and organizational functioning. They can provide identification and assessment of knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed for current and future development.

Competencies can be gained through a multitude of ways: life experiences, formal education, and training and development programs. Organizations are recognizing the value of training and development programs because they can be used to develop competencies and improve performances (Hafeez et al., 2002). Competency-based learning links training and career development to a set of competencies. Competency-based training focuses on curriculum content and management practices

that can contribute to transformative learning (Hodge, 2011). This approach has brought many benefits to organizations and workers by providing opportunities to attain competencies. Dubois and Rothwell (2004) suggested that when choosing career and training development activities to achieve competencies, organizations should target on the specific core competencies instead of the courses. In other words, learning activities should be aligned with the required competencies of the field.

Competency-based approaches are used, in part, for developing and increasing individual and organizational effective performance. Competency historical roots can be traced through the intelligence movement. In comparison to intelligence quotient (IQ), the study of emotional quotient, also referred to as emotional intelligence (EQ or EI), is relatively new, with the term being coined in 1990 by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer (Goleman, 1995). IQ is used to measure cognitive abilities. However, many scholars (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman; 1995; McClelland, 1974) argued that IQ is not the only way to predict individuals' performance. In addition to cognitive abilities, emotional (Goleman, 1995, 1998) and social intelligences (SQ) (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 2006) are important constructs in understanding effective performance.

### **Intelligence Movement**

IQ, EI, and SQ are different intelligences that have been used to study competency and performance. These three constructs been embraced by educators and trainers, in the form of programs, to teach cognitive, emotional, and social intelligence skills (Goleman, 1998). Cognitive ability, generally measured by IQs, has been used for over a century to predict individuals' success. McClelland (1974) and his proponents

argued that just because some individuals possessed a high IQ did not mean they would be successful. Moreover, his proponent, Goleman (1995) argued that institutions put greater focus on cognitive intelligence while neglecting other intelligences. For this reason, organizations should emphasize other intelligences, including EI and SQ.

**Cognitive intelligence.** The study of IQ was developed by psychologists, Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon, in 1905 (Siegler, 1992), and has historically been the standard test of intelligence (Hughson, 1964). IQ tests are used to predict individuals' cognitive ability, which was thought to be able to determine their success in school and life (Richardson, 2002). Cognitive intelligence research continued beyond Binet and Simon's (1905) work to include Terman's (1922) scoring and classification system. Terman's IQ scale to classify learners ranged from a low of below 70 to a high of 140 and above. While Terman believed that IQ was the greatest predictor to life success, the idea of intelligence was determined to be far more complex than a single score produced by one test (Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 1995; McClelland, 1974). For this reason, research on intelligence continued.

**Social intelligence.** The concept of social intelligence has a long history among intelligence researchers. The father of social intelligence, E.L. Thorndike (1920), distinguished social intelligence from other forms of intelligence, defined it as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls-to act wisely in human relations" (p. 228). In essence, Thorndike argued that such interpersonal effectiveness was of vital importance to individuals' success. Individuals with this intelligence have the ability to feel, empathize, understand, and manage people (Goleman, 1995;

Thorndike & Stein, 1937). Unlike research on IQ, social intelligence was less rigorously explored, because it was overwhelmed by different definitions and concepts. Gardner's (1983) SI theory expanded Thorndike's work to include two types of social intelligence: intrapersonal and interpersonal, which involved the understanding of oneself and others, respectively (Goleman, 1995).

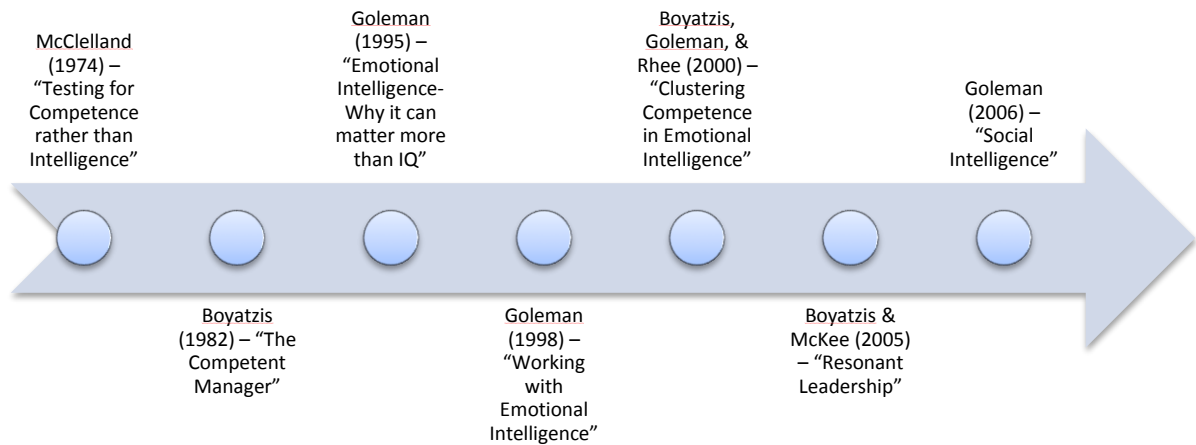
**Multiple intelligences.** The concept of multiple intelligences was proposed by Howard Gardner in the 1980s, whereby human intelligence consists of not just a single entity, but multiple ones (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Gardner and Hatch (1989) proposed eight independent intelligences: (a) linguistic, as used in reading a book or writing a poem; (b) logical, as used in solving in mathematical problems; (c) spatial, as used in fitting suitcases into the trunk of a car; (d) musical, as used in singing and writing a song; (e) bodily, as used in dancing or playing sports; (f) interpersonal, as used in understanding and interacting with other people; (g) intrapersonal, as used in understanding oneself; and (h) naturalistic, as used in discerning patterns in nature. After the theory had been proposed, Sternberg (1999) noted that very few studies had been conducted to validate the existence of these eight types of intelligences.

**Emotional intelligence.** Another construct is emotional intelligence, first proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later popularized by Goleman (1995). According to Salovey and Mayer (1993), emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to observe and manage one's own and others' emotion. Emotional intelligence, generally speaking, is the ability to perceive and express emotions. While Salovey and Mayer's work focused on intelligence, Goleman's

(1995) EI work focused on work and leadership performance. Salovey and Mayer (1993) and Goleman's work on emotional intelligence has influenced more research attempting to shape and validate the construct.

### **Development of Managerial Competency Models**

This section attempts to trace the background of competency-based human resources, its development, its main features, and its major stakeholders. The development of managerial competency models is better understood by acknowledging different intelligences. Figure 1 depicts the competency movement, starting with the work of McClelland who was given credit for starting competency studies. Hay Group's McClelland Center, founded as McBer and Company by David McClelland, is an international consulting company that focuses on human motivation, competency, and leadership development. Hay Group maintains strong relationships with recognized scholars who studied with McClelland in order to further understand workplace behaviors that impact individual and organization performance. Daniel Goleman was McClelland's advisee (Goleman, 1995). Richard Boyatzis, professor of organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University, was McClelland's colleague (Boyatzis, 1982). Boyatzis and Goleman were both influenced by McClelland's work; thus, they continued to research and publish on competency and its relationship to effective performance.



*Figure 1. The competency movement.*

### **McClelland’s “Testing for Competence Rather Than Intelligence”**

McClelland is often cited as the source of the competency development movement because of his 1974 paper “Testing for Competence Rather Than Intelligence.” McClelland (1974) argued that intelligence and aptitude tests are not good predictors of individuals’ success. He claimed that school grades do not necessarily predict competence in real life outcomes, aside from the advantage that students’ credentials bear on schools. He proposed an alternative to the testing movement, suggesting competence testing as an alternate approach to traditional intelligence testing. One of the principles he suggested for a testing alternative is criterion sampling. Criterion sampling means that testers are assessed on abilities specific to their jobs. For instance, to determine the best police officer, McClelland identified activities to sample from a list for selecting applicants. Because criterion sampling is specific to the criteria involved, McClelland noted that tests should assess competencies that are more

generally useful in life outcomes. He expanded the traditional cognitive competencies that involve reading, writing, and math to include personality competencies that consist of communication skills, patience, moderate goal setting, and ego development.

### **Boyatzis’ “The Competent Manager”**

McClelland’s colleague, Boyatzis (1982), expanded McClelland’s work to include managerial competency, more specifically, in relationship to performance improvement. Boyatzis said that managers should have a cluster of competencies. He provided numerous competency clusters, such as (a) the goal and action management cluster including efficiency orientation, proactivity, diagnostic use of concepts, and concern with impact competencies; (b) the leadership cluster including self-confidence, use of oral presentations, conceptualization, and logical thought competencies; (c) the human resource management cluster including the use of socialized power, managing group process, positive regard, and accurate self-assessment competencies; (d) the directing subordinates cluster including the use of unilateral power, developing others, and spontaneity competencies; and (e) and the focus on others cluster including perceptual objectivity, self-control, stamina, and adaptability competencies. These five clusters resulted in a list of 21 competencies that managers should have to be competent.

### **Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence**

Goleman was McClelland’s advisee and protégé. He was influenced by his advisor’s work on competency to introduce emotional competence into his studies. Goleman’s (1995) *Emotional Intelligence—Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* was the start of transitioning from the use of a large number of competencies to the use of a more

limited number. He popularized the concept of emotional intelligence by using psychology and neuroscience to discuss the importance of emotional intelligence in individuals' success, specifically arguing that IQ is not a good indicator of success. Goleman distinguished between emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Emotional intelligence determines individuals' ability to learn self-mastery, while emotional competence is individuals' perceptions of their own emotional abilities. Goleman argued that unlike IQ, EI is not fixed in everyday life; therefore, any individual and organization can be emotionally competent. He later published another book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998). In this book, Goleman (1998) discussed EI in organizations and what differentiates star performers from the average. Goleman discussed emotional intelligence competency clusters by arguing that star performers must master a mix of competencies. He presented an emotional intelligence model that included 25 competencies grouped in five clusters.

### **Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee's "Clustering Competence in Emotional Intelligence"**

Boyatzis et al. (2000), in "Clustering Competence in Emotional Intelligence," took Goleman's (1998) model of 25 competencies, arrayed in five clusters, and reduced them empirically to 20 competencies to develop the *Emotional Competencies Inventory* (ECI). They argued that connecting a component of the organizational culture to a competency cluster seems easier than connecting to a single competency as the "clusters of competency offer an appropriate focal point from which to identify, predict, and establish multiple levels of causal connections" (Boyatzis et al., 2000, p. 357). For



example, using factor analysis, Boyatzis et al. (2000) demonstrated that self-efficacy and self-definition drive initiative.

### **Boyatzis and McKee’s “Resonant Leadership”**

Boyatzis and McKee (2005) in *Resonant Leadership*, talked about how emotional intelligence is the key ingredient great leaders use to build resonant relationships in their teams and organizations. They discussed how emotional intelligence can sustain great leaders’ effectiveness and resonance. They also discussed what happens to those leaders who never practice emotional intelligence and who, as a result, might have trouble sustaining resonance and effectiveness in today’s dynamic workforce. Boyatzis and McKee argued that leaders who can create resonance are in tune with developing emotional intelligence, namely, the competencies of “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management” (p. 14).

### **Goleman’s “Social Intelligence”**

When Goleman (1995) wrote a book on EI, his focus was on a crucial set of individuals’ competencies, the ability to manage emotions and their inner self in order to manage positive relationships. In *Social Intelligence*, Goleman (2006) expanded his work on emotional intelligence in order to explore group dynamics. In his prologue, he said, “Here the picture enlarges beyond a one-person psychology—those capacities an individual has within— to a two-person psychology: what transpires as we connect” (p. 5). Take, for example, empathy, the sensing of another person’s feelings that allows rapport. Empathy is an individual ability that is needed to build rapport. Thus, the spotlight shifts to those situations that emerge when individuals interact. Goleman

believed that social interactions lead to relationship consequences. Emotions are contagious; every interaction has an emotional implication. In the “Emotional Economy” chapter, Goleman argued that individuals participate in an emotional economy in which social interactions result in a transfer of feelings.

Moreover, Goleman (2006) argued that social intelligence was excluded from the IQ test. After a fuller understanding of EI and SQ, non-cognitive abilities became crucial in understanding individuals’ performances. Goleman expanded his EI model that dealt with intrapersonal competencies to include SQ, which deals with interpersonal competencies. SQ is significant to teachers who want to motivate students and to organizations that want to attract and retain employees. Boyatzis, Goleman, and the Hay Group created the *Emotional and Social Competency Inventory* (ESCI) to assess leadership performance, a 360-degree assessment tool that describes 12 competencies that can be used to differentiate outstanding performers from average.

### **Emotional Intelligence: A Form of Managerial Competence**

The phrase “old wine in new bottles” means that an already existing concept is offered as though it is a new one (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Interest in emotional intelligence has increased significantly over the last decade after the concept was popularized by Goleman (1995). Although some researchers and practitioners have been optimistic about the importance of EI as a tool for managerial competence and organization development, critical questions remain about the concept and measurement. Is EQ a newer form of managerial competence or old wine in new bottles?

**Is EQ a new construct?** EQ is definitely not a new concept. Researchers had studied individual emotions long before the EQ construct was proposed. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were among the earliest to suggest the term “emotional intelligence.” They defined EI as the ability to assess, express, and manage emotions in the self and to others. In spite of this early definition, there has been misunderstanding regarding the exact definition and dimensions of the construct.

Goleman’s (1995) *Emotional Intelligence: Is It More Important Than IQ* provided the assertion that EI explains a higher percentage of change in individual success than IQ. Goleman (1998) also presented many important EQ links and somewhat expanded the construct to include a number of social and communication competencies. He later discussed this social competency in *Social Intelligence*. Although Goleman popularized the EI concept, it is evident and acknowledged that the construct was first labeled by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and has its roots in social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920). In spite its popularity, EI measures need more scientific support to make the EI construct promising in predicting important outcomes (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998). Some (Robertson & Smith, 2001) have also claimed that there is no evidence for its validity or that EI is a weak theory. Robertson and Smith (2001) stated that emotional intelligence scholars failed to provide demonstration of criterion-related validity for any specific occupational area. Brody (2004) pointed out the relatively weak theory development, and measures of EI, but also stressed its potential importance for human resources practices.

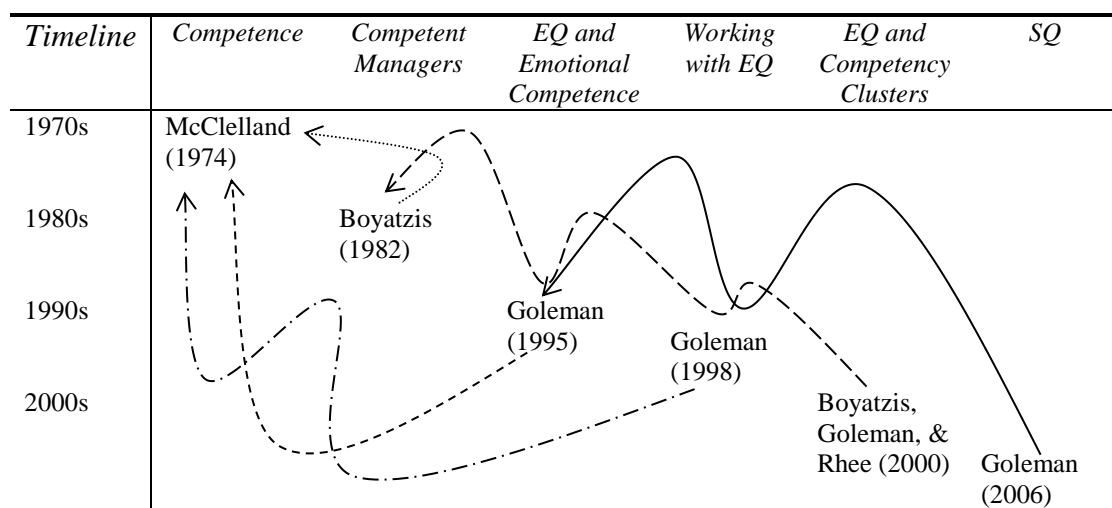
Salovey and Mayer (1993) originally viewed emotional intelligence as a function of social intelligence, which suggests that both concepts represent interrelated components of the same construct. Given its roots in social intelligence, Salovey and Mayer argued that the conceptual background of EI met the standards of SI. Whether EI is an antecedent, a moderator, or a consequence, researchers have somewhat different conceptualizations of the construct. These differences result in different approaches to the operationalization of the construct.

**EI as a form of managerial competence.** During the early stage of the EI construct, different researchers used different definitions of EI, which has led to some variations in the dimensions of the construct. Proponents of the EI construct have argued that it is distinct from traditional cognitive ability and that it is a meaningful construct that can be used to explain various managerial phenomena (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 1998). These proponents have developed numerous models and measurements to understand and measure the construct. Many continue to study the definition and dimensions. However, some scholars have voiced strong concerns about the validity and reliability of different scales.

The concept of competency-based human resources has gone from a new approach to a common practice since McClelland (1974) first proposed it as a critical differentiator from attitude and intelligence tests in predicting individuals' performance. Competency research, continued by Boyatzis (1982), Goleman (1995, 1998), and Boyatzis et al. (2000), which has resulted in many publications of different models, constructs, and measurement scales. Competency is defined as a capability or ability

(Boyatzis, 1982, 2009; McClelland, 1974). Boyatzis (2009) argued that competencies can be a behavioral approach to cognitive, emotional, and social intelligence. Boyatzis (2009) and Goleman (1998) suggested that EI and SQ are phrases to focus attention on emotional and social mechanisms of human talent (see Figure 2).

As presented earlier, a managerial competence was first discussed by Boyatzis (1982), *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*. Boyatzis provided a systematic approach that determines which behaviors of managers enable them to be effective in their jobs. He developed a model of managerial competence that contains five competency clusters: (a) the goal and action management cluster, (b) the leadership cluster, (c) the human resource management cluster, (d) the directing subordinates cluster, (e) and the focus on others cluster. These five clusters represent a list of 21 competencies that managers should possess to be competent. Competencies such as self-confidence, self-control, self-assessment, and concern with close relationship are behavioral approaches to EI. Later models of managerial competencies focused on a more limited list that includes EQ and SQ.



Note: Arrows denote direct links in the most recent research relative to competency

Figure 2. Competency model development.

In *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Goleman (1995) defined emotional competence as a “learned capability based on emotional intelligence which results in outstanding performance at work” (p. 15). Goleman’s EI model focused on job performance, modeling the competencies that separate average performers from superior ones. He noted that he borrowed the competency concept from his mentor, David McClelland (see Figure 2). McClelland’s sense of the nature of competence continued to inspire Goleman’s (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Boyatzis’ (1982) statement on the importance of emotional competencies also influenced Goleman’s (1998) EI work in individual and organizational performances (see Figure 2). However, Goleman (1998) discussed a more limited list of competencies. Boyatzis et al. (2000) reduced Goleman’s (1998) model of 25 competencies, arrayed in 12 clusters to 20 competencies to form the ECI. Boyatzis et al. (2000) argued that connections are easier to identify for clusters of competencies than for separate competencies.

Figure 2 provides an illustration of Goleman's EI and SQ direct links with McClelland and Boyatzis' competencies. From the illustration, one can depict the competency movement starting with McClelland and continuing with Boyatzis and Goleman. Both Boyatzis and Goleman's works were heavily influenced by McClelland's emphasis of competency.

**Is there a place for EQ in a new form of managerial competence model?** It is possible to conclude from the literature review that emotional intelligence is a construct that offers potential measures of performance and life success. In reviewing the different perspectives and models of emotional intelligence, it is evident that the construct addresses individual values and performances. This would align with Boyatzis' (1982) competency concept, which states that "a job competency is an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses" (pp. 20-21). Clearly, there are parallels between the drivers of interest in competencies and of EI. While some see the construct as being inclusive of personality traits (Salovey & Mayer, 1993), others (Boyatzis, 1995; Goleman, 1996, 1998) discussed the nature of the construct being linked to competencies.

The focus on emotional intelligence in relation to organizational performance appears to be derived from a desire to explain the achievement of success in management (Boyatzis, 2009) and leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 1998). Viewing emotional intelligence in the managerial competence context provides a basis for viewing it as a developable ability (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 1998). Goleman

(1998) argued that that a key distinction between “average” and “outstanding” performance lies in the consideration of emotional intelligence. Although not a new concept or a new approach of managerial competence, Goleman (1998) and Boyatzis (2009) stressed that an understanding of EQ is needed to assist organizations in the improvement of workplace competency.

### **Competencies in HRD**

Gangani, McLean, and Braden (2006) argued that competency is integral to HRD research and practice. When studying competencies, the significant components of HRD are performance and learning (Sun & Shi, 2008). HRD competency scholars (Gangani et al., 2006; Sun & Shi, 2008) suggested that organizations can remain competitive if they take on a competency approach that is used to align business strategies with individual performance. In other words, organizations should structure themselves in such a way that they continually build competencies to support individual development. Competency models thus work well to identify the link between individual and organizational performance (Kormanik et al., 2009). While there is tremendous value in implementing a competency model, it is also one of the greatest challenges facing HR professionals today as organizations continue to work in a highly complex, dynamic global market. Kormanik et al. (2009) argued that using competency models enable HRD scholars and practitioners to remain engaged, take ownership of self-development, and drive the HRD field in the right direction. While there are numerous benefits from developing and implementing a competency model, little research has been done to prepare HRD scholar-practitioners.



Competency has become widespread in organizations and is gaining importance in HRD research and practice. Although competency construct has not acquired an agreed-upon meaning, most competency scholars describe it as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics associated with superior performance. Every good HRD professional wants to improve, which starts with the desire to develop and is followed by the requirements to achieve that aspiration. Consequently, the HRD literature has expanded to include studies of competencies and their impact on the HRD field. When searching for the origin of competencies in the HR field, researchers generally cite McClelland's (1974) "Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence," which has been argued to be the key driving mechanism of competency as critical differentiator of performance. Under the guidance of McClelland, Boyatzis (1982) continued his teacher's work and published, *The Competent Manager*. Because of the works of McClelland and Boyatzis, the use of competencies has expanded in HRD research and practice. Some of the major studies from the HRD literature are reviewed below.

Elkin's (1990) work on competency-based HRD has influenced others to see the significance that competencies play in helping organizations to survive the turbulent, competitive, and global market. He argued that both macro- and micro-competency approaches have important contribution to HRD activities. HRD professionals are faced with the challenge of equipping employees with the appropriate skills to thrive in the workplace. Understanding how different competencies impact different phases of an employee's time in a job is the key to adopting the right approach. Elkin stated that

adopting a micro-competency approach means that HRD professionals are faced with the task of training employees in basic education, company orientation, and simple organizational knowledge and skills. When discussing macro-competencies, Elkin suggested looking at competencies that focus on long-term career employment. More specifically developmental competencies become more important as employees move further up in their occupational hierarchy.

Dalton (1997) proposed simplifying competency models to make them more practical. He argued that HRD practitioners spend a great deal of time developing and implementing competency models, making him question whether it was worth the time and effort. Competencies are behaviors that distinguish superior performers from ineffective ones (Boyatzis, 1982; Dalton, 1997). A competency model depicts knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics as a set of desired behaviors. Because of its importance, creating a robust and practical model is critical to saving time and money. Consequently, HRD professionals should not create a model based on beliefs and opinions. Instead, Dalton suggested that HRD practitioners should use a generic or an existing competency model and build HRD strategies around it.

Gangani et al. (2006) continued the discussion of competencies and their significance in various HR functions. They highlighted issues in developing and implementing competency approaches, with a particular emphasis on staffing and selection, education and training, organization development, and performance management. The purpose of staffing and selection is to recruit individuals that have the competencies to best serve the organization. In terms of performance management,

competencies can be used to design and implement training and development activities specifically for improving individuals' capabilities. Incorporating competencies into performance management activities ensures the alignment of individual and organizational goals.

Chen and Naquin (2006) discussed the importance of competency in predicting performance. Their work, however, focused on the design aspects of competency-based assessment centers. According to Chen and Naquin, an assessment center consists of "standardized procedures used for assessing behavior-based or performance-based dimensions whereby participants are assessed using multiple exercises and/or simulations" (p. 269). They proposed an integrative model that incorporated 360-degree feedback assessment to guide HRD practitioners in designing a competency-based assessment center. The model consists of eight phases. The first step is to build a hierarchical competency system that embraces quantitative and qualitative approaches to develop and redefine competencies. Once competencies are established, the next step is to link sub-competencies to training and the assessment center. The third step is to develop assessment activities that can assess individual competencies (e.g., role-play activities). The fourth step is to integrate the 360-degree feedback in the assessment design to aid in differentiating implicit and explicit behaviors. The fifth step is to determine appropriate activities for the data collected such as rating questionnaires and calculating scores. The sixth step is to determine performance outcomes by aligning performance indicators with the activity design. The seventh step is to determine

whether to use generic or customized materials. The final step is to select and develop qualified assessors.

Throughout the 20th century, competencies have played significant roles in international HRD research and practice. For example, Sun and Shi (2008) wrote in their 2008 article that competencies in China was a new term and HR practitioners were beginning to take the time to understand the concept. Gray (1999) applied the competency model to New Zealand's newspaper job advertisement in order to examine the relevance of the model to HRD practice and to examine what competencies employers were seeking from HRD practitioners. They chose the ASTD competency because it was created by HRD professionals as a tool to develop HRD practitioners. However, they learned from their findings that the ASTD model ignored personal competencies (e.g., motivation, enthusiasm, and flexible), which was argued to be a major component in assessing individual development. They argued that HRD competency model should include personal competencies because selecting individuals based on personal qualities was argued to be much simpler than trying to develop them. Another look at the ASTD competency model was done by Chen, Bian, and Hom (2005). More specifically, they used the ASTD model for workplace learning and performance (WLP) that required 52 competencies to be considered for a successful WLP practitioner. Chen et al. analyzed Taiwan HRD practitioners' perceptions of their WLP competencies in Taiwan. They learned from their study that Taiwan HRD practitioners play limited roles in the WLP field. They, however, were able to highlight to the significance of WLP competency development. Thus, they directed the needs for

development in areas such as “visioning, knowledge management, ability to see the big picture, leadership, and knowledge capital” (Chen et al., 2005, p. 29).

Based on the literature review, competency studies done in the HRD field illustrate its significance in both research and practice in different contexts, nationally and internationally. Le Deist and Winterton (2005) stated that the context will continue to impact the definition and usage of competency, especially in training and development activities. For instance, they argued that the use of competency in the United States and the United Kingdom has been focused primarily on job-related activities rather than behavioral competencies. While the United States and the United Kingdom take a one-dimensional approach to developing competencies, France, Germany, and Austria adopt a holistic approach. For example, the German dual system emphasizes learning inputs rather than outputs to master a trade. Within this approach, the process requires “moving from subject (inputs) to competence (outcomes) and curricula specifying learning fields rather than occupation-related knowledge and skills content” (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005, p. 37). Furthermore, a review of the literature shows that most studies have been centered on HRD practitioners. In view of application and perception surrounding competency, Kormanik et al. (2009) set out to propose a competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. As has already been discussed, the HRD scholar-practitioner group plays a significant role in bridging HRD research and practice (Short & Shindell, 2009). Ruona and Gilley (2009) also argued that all HRD professionals should work toward becoming HRD scholar-practitioners because this group meets all of the standards of being advanced HRD professionals.

Scholar-practitioners are not atheoretical practitioners who are novices in using theories, or practitioners who meet only minimum standards of the field. Scholar-practitioners have developed increased competencies and professionalism in integrating theory and practice. Inherent in Ruona and Gilley's (2009) model are competencies that can be developed and mastered by HRD professionals, with the goal of becoming an HRD scholar-practitioner. Kormanik et al. (2009) and Ruona and Gilley (2009) have provided models that focused on HRD scholar-practitioner competencies. What is most important here is that HRD professionals can use a competency model to plan their professional development. Academic programs, too, can use a competency model to ground their curriculum design. Finally, organizations can use the competency model as a way to determine the kind of HRD practitioners they want to recruit and hire.

### **Theoretical Framework: Contingency Theory**

Although the HRD literature points to a suggested gap between research and practice, little research has concluded that such a gap can be resolved through HRD scholar-practitioners. There is notable commentary that the gap is causing problems for the field, with concerns that practitioners are not basing their work on research and theories and scholars are not producing work that is relevant to practice. Short (2006) and Kormanik et al. (2009) suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners can serve as a bridge in closing the gap between research and practice. Kormanik et al. broadened the study to include competency, with the goal of addressing the need for a competency model to serve as a powerful tool in communicating expectations and determining superior performance. Contingency theory is a theoretical approach that serves as the

basis for an enhanced understanding of the relationship between competency and performance. Therefore, the theoretical framework of the competency study and HRD scholar-practitioner performance is based on the contingency theory. Since contingency theory attempts to understand performance as a function of the congruence between an organization and its environment, a contingent perspective in this research can provide the theoretical base for understanding HRD scholar-practitioner competencies.

Developed in 1967 by Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch, contingency theory states that optimal performance is expected to occur when the individuals' capabilities are aligned with the needs of the job and the organization environment (Boyatzis, 2009; Ruekert et al., 1985). Contingency scholars argue that performance is a function of fit between an organization and its environment. The concept of fit here is to determine the match between the competencies, the job, and the organizational environment (Boyatzis, 2009). The theory states that the best way to establish, lead, or manage an organization depends on the environment in which the organization is embedded (Scott, 1992). It is a class of behavioral theory that has two underlying assumptions: (a) there is no one right way to organize, and (b) any way of organizing is not equally effective (Galbraith, 1973). These organizational scholars (Galbraith, 1973; Scott, 1992) worked to identify a match between the characteristics of an organization and the environment that lead to effective performance. Boyatzis (2009) argued that maximum performance can occur when individuals' competencies are aligned with the job demands and the organizational environment.

Kormanik et al. (2009) identified general competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners. However, the method used for developing the general competency model was quantitative in nature because participants were asked to choose from a set of predefined competencies. Sixteen competencies were identified and then formed to propose the HRD scholar-practitioner competency. Similarly, in *The Competent Manager*, Boyatzis (1982) identified competencies that can be used to enhance managerial effectiveness. He discussed contingencies in measuring competencies. Contingencies such as the individual, job demands, and the organizational environment have been demonstrated to impact competencies (Boyatzis, 2009). Superior performance is believed to occur when an individual's talent is consistent with the needs of the job demands and the organizational environment. The individual's talent is defined by his or her vision, values, philosophy, competencies, life stages, and interests; whereas, job demands are defined by tasks and roles, and organizational environment is defined by culture, structure, types of industries, and core competence (Boyatzis, 2009).

For instance, the organizational environment influences the competencies employees need to be successful in a particular a job. Organizational environment is the context within which effectiveness is defined and performances are evaluated. Oil and gas, healthcare, and education are examples of different types of industries that are facing different opportunities and challenges; thus, the individuals employed and the work produced differ from one industry to another. Boyatzis' (2009) industry characteristic is an example of organizational environment that can be predicted to impact competencies. Overall, organizational environments have important implications



for HRD scholar-practitioner competency development. Therefore, a scholar-practitioner competency model is needed in the HRD field, making the best-fit theory necessary.

Furthermore, different job demands imply different practices, and individual and core competencies differ. In addition, job demand is contingent upon HRD scholar-practitioner competencies. It is therefore interesting to explore whether the organization in which the HRD scholar-practitioner is employed influences the set of HRD competencies. It is also interesting to explore whether the employment level in which the scholar-practitioner is positioned influences the required competencies. According to Boyatzis (1982), HR professionals of a higher level should demonstrate a higher degree of competence than HR professionals of a lower level. In reference to contingency theory and its explanation in competency development, Boyatzis (2009) indicated that individual, organizational, and industry contexts can influence HRD scholar-practitioner competencies.

Contingency theory has some important underlying assumptions, the first being that the better the fit, the better the performance. Boyatzis (2009) posited that with the contingency approach, maximum performance can be achieved if individual competencies are aligned with job demands and organizational environment. HRD scholar-practitioners can work toward superior performance by ensuring that their competencies contribute to organizational performance. To do so, they need to be well aware of the job demands and organizational environment that influences competency development and performance. Changing environmental and organizational contexts

have an important impact on the demonstration of competencies (Boyatzis, 2009).

Therefore, the construction of competencies requires understanding internal and external organizational factors that influence individual performances.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a preliminary review of the literature related to HRD scholar-practitioner and competency models. This chapter was organized into three sections. The first section provided an overview of HRD scholars, HRD practitioners, and HRD scholar-practitioners, followed by a discussion of the gap between research and practice and Short's (2006) proposal that HRD scholar-practitioners serve as a bridge to close the gap. The second section provided an overview of competencies and discussed the need to develop a competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. The final section discussed contingency theory as a theoretical framework for developing enhanced understanding of the relationship between competency and performance.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

Basic interpretative qualitative study methodology provides tools for researchers to study how individuals make meaning of a situation (Merriam, 2009). Basic, interpretive study allows researchers to understand the “meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22). In this chapter, I provide an overview of a basic, interpretive research design. I begin the chapter with a restatement of the research purpose, questions, and theoretical framework. I then provide the research paradigm for the study as well as a justification of why a multi-case study was employed. Additionally, I discuss the sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis techniques, and strategies for enhancing the trustworthiness of findings. Finally, I conclude this chapter by discussing the researcher’s subjectivity.

#### **Restatement of Research Purpose and Questions**

Literature in HRD identifies a gap between scholars and practitioners (Bing, 2009; Moats & McLean, 2009). The theory-to-practice and practice-to-theory gaps are greatest when discussing “pure scholars” and “pure practitioners” (Kormanik et al., 2009). Kormanik et al. (2009) identified three groups of professionals who play a role in HRD scholarship and practice: (a) pure scholars, (b) pure practitioners, and (c) scholar-practitioners. A pure scholar is someone who focuses more on theories but lacks the context in which to employ them. A pure practitioner is someone who focuses more on reaching the bottom line, regardless of quality of work produced (Kormanik et al., 2009).

Finally, a scholar-practitioner is someone who integrates a practice-theory approach in his or her work (Ruona & Gilley, 2009). Short (2006) argued that this critical third group can close the gap between research and practice.

Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) proposed a collaborative effort between scholars and practitioners to meet the needs of both by suggesting that scholar-practitioners act as a channel between empirical-based HRD research and practice (Short, 2006). However, bridging the gap requires a unique role for scholar-practitioners. A review of the HRD literature shows that little research has been done to explore how HRD scholar-practitioners identify and define their own competencies. Furthermore, there is an unclear understanding of the required competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners. Therefore, this study explored competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioner using a basic qualitative research approach. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What competencies do HRD scholar-practitioners consider essential to integrating research and practice?
2. What experiences do HRD scholar-practitioners have in integrating research and practice?
3. What strategies do HRD scholar-practitioners use in integrating research and practice?

### **Research Paradigm**

According to Merriam (2009), a research investigation can be approached from many philosophical stances. The researcher's theoretical stance determines the specific

research design that is employed for conducting the study. While positivism has a place in the research arena (Crotty, 2003), this study relied on a social constructivism paradigm resting with qualitative research. Positivists develop and test hypotheses to reach one objective truth in quantitative studies (Merriam, 2009). Conversely, constructivists or interpretivists perform observations recognizing multiple truths, so accepting only one true conclusion is not accepted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My goal in this study was to understand competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners. Based upon the problem and questions guiding my research, a qualitative approach was most appropriate.

### **Rationale for a Qualitative Approach**

Scholar-practitioner competency models have provided professionals with a framework to organize particular knowledge, skills, and abilities that impact their theory-to-practice effort. This competency model requires that a segment of its development involves the collection of individuals' experiences. In the past, the development of competency models has relied on quantitative research methods using statistical analysis. However, qualitative research methods that seek to build understanding and discover meanings are immensely valuable in developing a robust scholar-practitioner competency model.

Kormanik et al.'s (2009) study used quantitative methods to develop a preliminary general competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners. They used Garavan and McGuire's (2001) three-step expert panel method for constructing their preliminary general competency model: (a) select experts of the occupational role, (b)

have experts identify a list of competencies, (c) have experts prioritize the list. The researchers asked participants to choose competencies from a set of 67 cards, with each card having a general competency. Based on their findings, 16 competencies emerged. Although Kormanik et al.'s (2009) study provided the basis for HRD scholar-practitioner competencies, there are several limitations: (a) the data came from a convenience sample, (b) the data contained a self-selection bias, and (c) the method used to develop the competency model was positivistic in that respondents had to choose from a set of predefined competencies.

Kormanik et al.'s (2009) choice of the quantitative approach provided little room for participants to share their thoughts and experiences. This qualitative study strengthens Kormanik et al.'s findings because it provided participants with an opportunity to reflect, which allows for more descriptive data (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research methods with interactive, open-ended interviewing questions to data collection enabled HRD scholar-practitioners the opportunity to give complete assessment of competencies and strategies used for evidence-based practice. Kormanik et al.'s quantitative approach failed to capture the totality of individual's experience and the ways in which they interact with their environment to gain their competencies. In this qualitative approach, rather than participants choosing from a set of predefined competencies, participants were free to reflect and share their experiences. The resulting data were richly descriptive and allow for a more meaningful understanding of each situations. Qualitative research provides the tools for understanding the complexity of core competencies and HRD scholar-practitioners' work. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

emphasized the naturalist nature of qualitative research because it allows researchers to study things in their natural settings.

### **Social Constructivism Paradigm**

A paradigm, according to Kuhn (1962/1996), is the dominant understanding of a particular class of phenomena at a particular time. Kuhn noted a paradigm shift in research to generate knowledge. This shift involves accepting the notion of multiple realities. This paradigm shift was a move toward qualitative research, using the techniques of interviews, observations, and document analysis for data collection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the choice of research paradigm, rather than the choice of research method for any studies is the overriding concern. The researcher's paradigm influences perceptions, values (axiology), the nature of reality (ontology) and truth (epistemology). Moreover, the paradigm influences the way in which research is conducted, from the design (methodology and methods) to the data presentation. My study was placed within the social constructivism paradigm.

The worldview or the one truth underlying the positivistic paradigm is conventional and fails to capture the multiple realities that influence experiences and behaviors. I noted my particular stance because it influenced the specific research design that was employed for carrying out my study. Social constructivism assumes that the meaning of the experiences is constructed by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). From this stance, this study aimed to understand how individuals' experiences and their interaction within their social world influenced their behaviors around competency development and utilization. What is important in the

social constructivism paradigm is the understanding of the experiences from the perspective of the individuals. The world, or reality, is not permanent as assumed in a positivist paradigm. Instead, there are multiple realities or truths, and each truth is in flux and can be changed over time (Merriam, 2009).

### **Research Design**

HRD scholar-practitioners are complex individuals with numerous experiences and worldviews. Because of this complexity and because I desire to understand HRD scholar-practitioners and their interactions with richness and depth of details, I believed that a qualitative study using a basic qualitative research design was appropriate for my study (Merriam, 2009). A basic qualitative study is interested in “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This approach allows a researcher to review how individuals make sense of their lives and the worlds in which they are embedded. A basic qualitative research study offers a means for investigating complex social interactions through the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam et al., 2002). In this study’s context, participants constructed their reality based on their interactions with the social worlds.

The exploratory nature of the study prompted me to select Yin’s (2014) interview protocol. Yin proposed an interview protocol as a means to facilitate the data collection planning and analysis. I used Yin’s interview protocol to aide me in outlining key information to be collected from each participant. The protocol also facilitated the communication between the participants and me. Yin argued that researchers who use



an interview protocol allow participants to gain a better picture of the research project; thus, it allows participants to gain a better appreciation for the research process. For this particular study, each participant was an HRD scholar-practitioner who has experience in integrative research and practice. HRD scholar-practitioners were interviewed, and the resulting data were used to interpret their perception of competencies needed to be competent in their field of work and the strategies needed to integrate research and practice. In addition to developing an interview protocol, the nature of the study also prompted me to follow Stake's (1995) suggestion in outlining main issues highlighting the context of each phenomenon, which is HRD scholar-practitioners' perception of competencies, specifically for evidence-based practice. Interviewing each participant enabled me to focus on how individuals construct meanings. Specifically, the interpretive interview technique allowed me to study and understand how HRD scholar-practitioners make sense of their evidence-based practice worlds.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Stake (2006) stipulated that there is no mechanical way of selecting participants. Selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority; instead, balance and variety are of greater importance because one wants to select participants that will provide more opportunity to learn (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). That said, not limiting the sample to a specific gender or field will provide for a richer data, because the purpose here is to include participants with a broad range of perspectives. For the above reason, I selected 10 to 20 participants for my study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended sampling to a point where data is saturated or redundant. Since the

purpose is to maximize information, sampling was terminated when information become redundant at 14 participants.

For qualitative fieldwork, it is common to draw a purposive sampling, a sample tailored to the study in order to allow for variety and create opportunities for intensive study (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). As such, criterion-based sampling and snowball sampling techniques was used to identify the participants. The individual HRD scholar-practitioner was selected based on three criteria:

- Each participant must integrate research and practice.
- Each participant must have at least 5 years of experience as an HRD scholar-practitioner.
- Each participant must hold a least a master's degree.

Short (2006) determined that the number of years in research and practice play a direct role in the gap of HRD scholars and practitioners as well as create tension between them. The criterion-based sampling strategy provides “balance and variety” (Stake, 2006, p. 26), and provides more opportunities to learn. Additionally, participants were purposefully selected to reflect some diversity in areas of sex, educational background, and job experience. Using the defined criteria, the first participant was selected based on recommendations from a colleague who has contacts of scholar-practitioners in the HRD field. Snowball sampling was employed in which each participant was asked to refer potential participants.

Once I identified potential participants, I contacted them via email or in person to determine their interest in participating in this study. I drew a convenience sample from

eligible participants based on time, expense, and access. I sent each potential participant a formal introductory letter (Appendix A) along with a demographic tool (Appendix B). The introductory letter (Appendix A) provides an explanation of the purpose of the study and the extent of the participant's involvement. I used the demographic tool (Appendix B) to acquire participants' background information including age, sex, education, and length of employment. The demographic data helped enrich my understanding of each individual's experiences with research and practice.

### **Data Collection**

Merriam (2009) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that there is a variety of methods by which to collect data in a qualitative study including interviews, observations, documents, archival records, and physical artifacts. I used interviews as my main data collection source and participants' resumes and job descriptions as supporting documents. Interviews are an essential source of qualitative evidence because interpretative studies focus on how individuals construct meanings of their lives (Merriam, 2009). In other words, interviewing is necessary in order to find out things that cannot be observed, such as behaviors, feelings, and worldviews. It is also necessary to interview in order to understand past events that are impossible to replicate (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, participants were asked to share critical incidents of evidence-based practice during the interviews. Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique (CIT) was used to guide the interview process. CIT is a qualitative interview procedure which facilitates the exploration of significant incidents identified by

participants (Chell & Pittaway, 1998). The objective of using CIT was to gain understanding of the incident from the perspective of the participants.

**Interviews.** Fourteen participants were interviewed, all with diverse backgrounds in academic, corporate, and non-profit organizations. 14 participants were interviewed, all with diverse backgrounds in academic, corporate, and non-profit organizations. Selected individuals were interviewed either via Skype, conference call, or in person over an extended period of two meetings that lasted between 60-90 minutes. Yin argued that the key to a prolonged interview is to get participants to provide in-depth insights about the phenomenon. The interviewees were asked the following questions:

1. What is your career journey like?
2. Why do you see yourself as a HRD scholar-practitioner?
3. What are some successful experiences in which you used research to guide practice?
4. What are some challenging experiences you faced while integrating research and practice?
5. Reflecting on your experiences, what skills do you possess that have enabled you to bring research into your practice?
6. In your opinion, what skills are essential to become a successful scholar-practitioner?

The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by an external party (Appendix G). Prior to the interview, I gave participants an informed consent form (Appendix C). The consent form outlined the nature and purpose of the study, the

participant's right to withdraw from the study, a statement of how data would be stored, and contact information of the researcher. The participants were required to sign the consent form before the start of the interview. All completed consent forms were stored and locked in a safe location.

**Documents.** Because interviewees' responses are subject to bias or poor recall (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2014), triangulating interview data with information from other data sources was helpful. Therefore, I used resumes, LinkedIn profiles, and job descriptions as supporting documents. Boyatzis (2009) indicated that competencies can be developed and can influence work. Therefore, I collected resumes and job descriptions to better understand the roles of the individuals in their work. Document analysis has a place and function in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2014) recommended using document analysis in combination with other qualitative research methods as a way to triangulate the data. Furthermore, documents provide the opportunity to develop meaning and insights relevant to the research problem (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). My use of both interview and document analysis methods was aligned with my decision to use a blended methodology, in order to ensure triangulation. Using only interviews or document analysis alone would not produce in-depth information I need. For this reason, I used interviews in combination with document analysis to help me guard against the criticisms associated with researcher bias and study rigor.

## **Data Analysis for Interviews and Documents**

The data gathered through the means of interviews and documentation was analyzed following Boyatzis' (1998) thematic analysis method. Boyatzis noted that thematic analysis is a process of "encoding qualitative information" (p. vi). Thus, the researcher develops words or phrases that serve as labels for each category or theme identified. Stake (1995) maintained that there is no particular time when data analysis begins. In fact, data analysis should happen throughout the entire process beginning with the "first interview, the first observations, the first document read" (Merriam, 2009, p. 165).

The exploratory nature of this study necessitated the use of interviews to identify and document specific competencies. To collect HRD scholar-practitioners' perceptions and experiences of research-practice integration, participants were asked to describe in great narrative detail specific incidents in which they felt effective and ineffective. These interviews were then transcribed and coded using Boyatzis' (1998) thematic analysis to identify specific competencies and their corresponding frequency. The more frequently a participant is coded for demonstrating a competency for example, communication skill, the more confident I became that communication skill is an HRD scholar-practitioner competency.

The coding process involved recognizing an important theme and encoding it (Boyatzis, 1998). Encoding the information involved arranging the data to identify and develop themes. The following subsections were described by Boyatzis (1998) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) as processes involved in each stage of the data analysis.

**Stage 1: Developing a code list.** The codes chosen served as a data management tool for establishing categories and interpreting information in a safe and organized manner. Boyatzis (1998) noted that a list of predefined codes is an essential step in the data analysis process in order to determine the applicability of the code to the raw data. In this step, I assigned a combination of letters and numbers to various aspects of my data, including names, identities, and locations of participants. This list later served as identifying notations for each interview and set of field notes.

**Stage 2: Unitizing the information.** Unitizing served as the basis for categorization because it dealt with units of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process began with reading the first interview transcript. As I read through the transcript, I made notes and comments on interesting information that I found important to my study. The process of making notations next to pieces of data is called *unitizing* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each piece of data was transferred to a note card and then coded.

**Stage 3: Categorizing the information.** The crucial task of categorizing was done in order to bring together the note cards and categorize them into groups that were related to the same content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). The challenge was to construct categories abstracted from the data (Merriam, 2009). The category set that emerged cannot be described as the set. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that each category set should be reviewed once all note cards have been exhausted. The review

was an ongoing process. I paid close attention to the “miscellaneous” pile because cards that may not seem to fit during the early stages turned out to be relevant.

**Stage 4: Identifying themes.** Once categories were identified and reviewed, connecting categories and major headings became a process of discovering themes and patterns in the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Similarities and differences between categories or groups of data emerged, indicating patterns and/or potential conflicts in response to the research questions. Furthermore, each category with subsets turned out to be potential themes, with differences and similarities between the responses of groups with varying competencies.

**Stage 5: Legitimizing identified themes.** The final stage was the process of further examining the categories for possible relationships among categories that could lead to more potential themes. Revisiting previous stages to ensure that the units, categories, and codes of the data have been exhausted was a way of ensuring that nothing was overlooked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis involves “skimming, reading, and interpretation” (p. 32). Because documents contained “text and images that have been recorded” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27), the aforementioned process, in addition to Bowen’s document analysis process was used to code, categorize, and identify themes from the document analysis. Table 1 outlines the sampling of documents and data analyzed.



Table 1

*A Sampling of Document Analysis*

Documents Selected	Data Analyzed
Resumes/LinkedIn	Individuals' skills and abilities
Job description	Individuals' duties within their particular job

A thorough review of documents provided background information helped me understand the participants' jobs and their role within their organization. First, I developed a code list for each participant's organization, ensuring that the organization's identity was kept private. Furthermore, and most importantly, I re-read and reviewed each job description and competency model to identify meaningful and relevant passages of the documents by separating pertinent and non-pertinent information (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis revealed that individual and organizational competencies play a role in HRD scholar-practitioners work.

**Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness, research data need to be valid, reliable, and gathered in an ethical manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The search for specific criteria to ensure research quality means that the criteria of validity, reliability, and transferability were essential for the research to be accepted as suitable for research and practice. The criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative research were needed to assess any research quality. However, there is a plethora of work that attempts to articulate and list the criteria that describe the characteristics of what constitutes good qualitative research. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study findings, Yin (2014)

recommended four tactics: (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (d) reliability. The following is based on Yin's recommendation:

- Construct validity deals with finding the right “operational measure” (p. 45). Qualitative studies have been criticized for their subjective nature because the researcher fails to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures but instead bases his or her findings on personal judgment.
- Internal validity deals with establishing a “causal relationship” (p. 47). Since this method is mainly a concern for explanatory study, this approach was not applied to this exploratory study.
- External validity deals with the problem of how the case study findings can be generalized. In other words, it seeks to demonstrate how the findings can be applied in situations other than in the ones found in the particular study.
- Reliability deals with how the findings can be “repeated with the same results” (p. 49) in other studies. Since the goal is to minimize bias and error, documentation is critical in this stage.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also discussed trustworthiness but they used different terminology than that found in Yin's (2014) case study tactics to define it, even though the terms have relatively the same application; they used the terms *credibility*, *consistency*, *transferability*, and *confirmability*. Credibility deals with the question of how research findings match reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). This trustworthiness criterion can use techniques such as triangulation, peer debriefing, or member checking. Qualitative researchers addressing internal validity, or consistency,

should know that there is always a data interpreter; thus, data do not define themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Loh, 2013). Furthermore, transferability, or external validity, can establish trustworthiness using an in-depth description technique. Finally, confirmability, or objectivity, can establish trustworthiness using the confirmability audit technique. Table 2, inspired by Yin’s (2014) and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) model lists all of the actions researchers can take during the stages of coding and generating meaning to help ensure that they are being true to the data.

Table 2

*Stages of Trustworthiness and Methods*

Tests	Approach	Stages When Approach Occurred
Credibility	Use multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), peer debriefing, member checking, and reflective journal	Data collection
Transferability	Provide thick description	Research design
Dependability	Use study protocol	Data collection
Confirmability (Lincoln & Guba)	Positionality	Research design; data analysis

Source: Lincoln & Guba (1985); Yin (2014).

**Credibility**

Several techniques were used to achieve credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Procedures such as triangulating, reflecting, getting peer feedback, and bringing

information back to participants for evaluation are procedures that were carefully employed in this study to establish credibility.

**Triangulation.** By triangulating, a researcher attempts to provide multiple sources of evidence to achieve credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2014). By examining information collected from various sources, the researcher can reduce the impact of potential bias from a single source. Interviews, document analysis, and a reflexive journal (Appendix I) was used to validate the research findings in this study. Interviews was not only used to generate insights of each case, but was also be used as one of the methods to triangulate the data. The multiple sources of information were obtained from the 14 interviewees on the same topic. In this study, individuals interviewed included HRD scholar-practitioners working in academic, corporate, government agency, and non-profit organization. All were asked the same questions regarding their perception of competencies of an HRD professional.

Supporting documents, such as resumes and job descriptions, were obtained to provide background information that helped explain behaviors of interviewees as well as verify particular details that the participants supplied. A review of each document provided information on each participant's job duties, role within the organization, and collection of competencies required by the organization to perform in his or her particular work settings. These documents served as a foundation for an HRD scholar-practitioner competency model because they provided details about what individuals need to be competent performers in their jobs.

A reflexive journal (Appendix I) was incorporated to promote credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993). This journal is a “kind of diary in which the investigator on a regular basis records information about him- or herself” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 143). Creating transparency in the data collection and data analysis process is not an easy task (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). What is important in naturalistic inquiry is the idea of multiple truths. Therefore, the researcher cannot claim that the findings are valid or true. In this case, the aim was to keep the research process as transparent as possible, so I engaged the utilization of a reflective journal before, during, and after the research process. The aim was to make my values, thoughts, and experiences clear to both the audience and myself. Still, I was aware that I was the main instrument during the data collection and data analysis processes. Since my data collection was primarily interview-based, I read a lot about qualitative methodology and learned that the research process is unproblematic as long as the researcher is transparent and meets the criteria for trustworthiness. In relation to interviewing, this requires the interviewer to be non-reactive in order to increase the reliability of the interviewee’s responses.

**Peer debriefing.** External consultants employ peer debriefing to examine both the product and the process of the data analysis (Creswell, 1998; Swanson & Holton, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that “it is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). As I progress through this dissertation project, I formed a

network of support and mentors outside the field who are scholars and practitioners. These peers were a group of individuals to whom I turned to for feedback and guidance. With their help, I uncover taken-for-granted biases and assumptions during the data analysis stage. I also had the opportunity to assess emergent themes with the group to see if they seemed reasonable and acceptable to disinterested readers.

To ensure the most beneficial feedback, I requested help from another group of peers as well. Others who have held an impartial view of the study, and have kept up with the field was asked to examine the methodology, researcher's transcripts, and findings to ensure the collection and analysis of valid information. A methodologist outside my field examined my methodology and incorporated concepts from her field in order to give a richer, more robust research design.

**Member checking.** This technique required taking information back to the participants so that they can evaluate the accuracy and credibility of the interpretation (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that member checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314).

Throughout the study, I checked with the interviewees to receive feedback on the data they provide (Appendix H). The process was done formally and informally throughout the study, as suggested by Erlandson and colleagues (1993). During the interview, I informally summarized and restated points and comments made by the interviewee in order to correct any errors or misinterpretations. The process was done formally by asking each participant to review the transcript as well as my interpretation of the data.

## **Transferability**

Merriam (2009) noted that transferability is “concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 223). In positivist work, the concern often lies with generalizing the results to a wider population. In qualitative studies, on the other hand, the findings are applicable to a smaller population (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) suggested that transferability should not be rejected because the uniqueness of each experience can be applied to a broader group. However, the approach should be applied with caution (Yin, 2014). Providing a detailed or “thick” description in this area can be an important establishment for transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the contextual information of the study is reported in order to enable the reader to make such a transfer. Thus, the following information was given to the readers at the outset:

- The number of participants involved in the study.
- The data collection methods that were employed.
- The number and length of the interview sessions.
- The questions asked during the interviews.
- The documents collected.

A detailed description of each context was provided to allow readers to have the proper understanding of the phenomenon which later was used to relate to their own positions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that a thickly described research process, data, and findings allow the reader to digest each element of the research findings, determine whether he or she would have come to the same conclusion as the researcher.

## **Dependability**

For the issue of dependability, the research design plays a crucial role in enabling future researchers and readers to repeat the work with the purpose of yielding similar results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address the dependability issue more directly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested reporting the processes within the study in great detail. Similarly, Yin (2014) pointed out that an interview protocol (Appendix B) is a way of increasing reliability of the study and “is intended to guide the researcher in carrying out the data collection” (p. 84). An interview protocol is designed to keep the researcher on track. In order to enable readers to develop a thorough understanding of the research methods and findings, the research design was carefully reported in detail and contained the following elements:

- The research design describing what was planned and implemented.
- The data gathering techniques addressing the details of what was asked during the interviews and done during the document analysis.
- The data analysis process describing the breakdown of the findings.
- The final appraisal of the research process and findings reflecting and evaluating the effectiveness of the study.

## **Confirmability or Objectivity**

Confirmability shows that data, interpretations, and findings are rooted in contexts and individuals. The concept of confirmability is the researcher’s concern for objectivity. The purpose is to ensure that the findings are the result of experiences, perception, and ideas of the participants rather than the preference of the researcher



(Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the key to achieving confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own bias. Subjectivity in qualitative research is inevitable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009); therefore, acknowledging the researcher's position helps reduce the effect of bias in data analysis and findings. Much of the content in this area was expressed in the subjectivity/reflexivity statement. Researcher's bias and beliefs was also acknowledged within the findings because they helped explained the reason for favoring one approach over another.

### **Ethical Issues**

The aforementioned credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are four common criteria to determine trustworthiness of any qualitative studies (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to these criteria, ethics have also been discussed as an issue that needs attention in qualitative research. Several ethical issues have been raised that should be addressed before, during, and after the research has been conducted. Creswell (1998) and Merriam (2009) pointed out that researchers have an obligation to respect and protect participants. Informed consent, confidentiality, harm and risk, trust, and rapport are cautions researchers must be aware of in order to adhere to strict ethical guidelines (Maxwell, 1998; Merriam, 2009). The rigor of the research findings allowed them to be acceptable and therefore gain the importance to affect change. In order to do so, qualitative researchers need to demonstrate to readers that the procedures used to ensure the methods are reliable and the findings are valid; in

other words, the research findings are trustworthy, ethical, and are of value to research and practice.

### **Researcher Subjectivity**

Several authors have discussed researchers' perspectives and biases in case study research (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995) described the value of researcher subjectivity and how it affects the overall research process; thus, these authors cautioned that the researcher's positionality must be acknowledged and accounted for in the research process. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that study validity can be questioned without fully disclosing the researcher's relationship to the content being studied. Therefore, in this section, I provided an overview of who I am, what drew me to this study, and my personal investment in it.

I have a long academic career in the HRD field. I started the undergraduate HRD program at Texas A&M University in the fall of 2005. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in HRD in December of 2007 and a master's degree in May of 2010. At that time, I had basic experience in HRD. As part of my undergraduate degree plan, I was required to complete an internship. Thus, I took on an internship at a private ice-skating rink. As my project, I was asked to conduct a needs assessment with the purpose of identifying discrepancies within the organization. The only model I knew of at the time was the ADDIE model. As I learned more about the model in my graduate program, I knew that I did not do justice to the model because I did not apply it properly. However, it was two years later and too late for me to go back to complete the project. Had I done

the project differently, I would have incorporated the complex nature of the process to include learning over project management and results over process. This demonstrates that I was incompetent and was not fully ready to tackle a huge project on my own.

Another experience that drew me to this study happened with my undergraduate students. I had the opportunity to teach an HRD foundational course to undergraduate juniors and seniors. I facilitated, instructed, and managed learning and development activities in order to ensure that students gained the competencies to describe, design, implement, and evaluate human resources development models and programs associated with training, coaching, performance management, and career development. Feedback from students made me realize that getting employment with the aforementioned skills was difficult. Many students completed the undergraduate program with very little to no experience in practical work. The theoretical knowledge they gained was not enough to enter the practical world. I remember asking myself, “How can young professionals work toward being a competent individual within the field and communicate their skills in such a way marketable to organizations?” Or, as in the case of my research inquiry, “Should all students work toward being an HRD scholar-practitioner?”

Finally, the most important experience that influenced my interest was attending an HRD conference focusing on scholar-practitioners. I learned that students were having trouble putting theory into practice. Students said that we as scholars view competencies differently than those who are practitioners. Additionally, I presented an abstract at the HRD conference on what I thought was important research. A group of practitioners approached me saying that my research was not relevant in their field of

work. The comment hit me hard because as a scholar, I obviously want my research to be relevant to practice. The constructive feedback I received and the conference's focus on HRD scholar-practitioners resonated with me. I began to ask myself what it took to be a competent HRD scholar-practitioner. Should all HRD novices strive to be an HRD scholar-practitioner? If so, what competencies do they need to perform well within their work duties as an HRD scholar-practitioner?

These experiences formed the basis of my topic of inquiry. Based on the review of the literature, I learned that few studies have focused on the required competencies of an HRD scholar-practitioner. Therefore, I feel that this study served as a basis to exploring competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners. Moreover, this study contributed to the work of competencies in the HRD field. Most importantly, the study is an opportunity for me to study in-depth this phenomenon for my own personal experience and knowledge.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology related to this study. The main purpose of this chapter was to highlight the multiple case study methodology, the trustworthiness associated with this research design, and the credibility, transferability, dependability, and credibility need to make this a rigorous study. Exploring competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners requires a research design that allows for a qualitative approach. Multiple case study research design enabled me to gather data that reflected the perceptions of HRD scholar-practitioners in their natural settings. By reviewing this issue from a qualitative

perspective, I was able to provide an in-depth overview of HRD scholar-practitioners.

The following chapter presents the seven case studies and an analysis of the information obtained from them.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The previous chapter described the methodology applied in this research, including the sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis methods, and a discussion linking the chosen methodology to the research questions. This chapter presents major findings related to the research question. The chapter also provides a description of the study participants, including background information and major themes emerging from the data analysis process. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality.

#### **Methodology Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore competencies as perceived by an HRD scholar-practitioner using a basic qualitative study approach. A basic qualitative research study is interested in “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This approach allowed the researcher to review how individuals make sense of their lives and the worlds in which they are embedded. In this study, participants constructed their reality based on their interactions with their social worlds.

The exploratory nature of this study necessitated the use of interviews using Flanagan’s critical incident technique to identify and document specific competencies. To collect HRD scholar-practitioners’ perceptions and experiences of research-practice integration, participants were asked to describe in great narrative detail specific incidents

in which they felt either effective or ineffective. These interviews were then transcribed and coded using Boyatzis' thematic analysis to identify specific competencies and their corresponding frequency. The more frequently a participant was coded for demonstrating a competency—for example, theoretical knowledge—the more likely it became that the competency was an HRD scholar-practitioner competency.

### **Participant Profiles**

Table 3 provides a summary of the 14 participants in this study. These participants are HRD scholar-practitioners who have a minimum five years of research-practice experiences, have at least a master's degree, and are currently employed. Depending on convenience of participants, they were interviewed in person, by conference call, or via Skype.

#### **SD**

SD is a corporate mid-senior level HR manager of a chemical company with expertise in compensation, staffing, EEO/diversity, talent development, labor relations, and employee relations. As an experienced HR professional, he is responsible for planning, directing, and delivering customized HR services in support of the Finance & IT, Legal, and Corporate Development functional organizations. SD comes to the chemical company from an aerospace defense contracting company where he also served as an HR business partner undertaking labor relations and compensation responsibilities. Previously, he worked with projects in EEO and diversity, giving him over 15 years of experience and expertise in the field of HR.

Table 3

*Participant Profiles*

Name	Gender	Education Level	Position	Position Level	Length of Experience as HRD S/P	Length of Time Utilizing Research in Practice
1. SD	M	Master's	HR Business Partner	Senior	6-8 yrs.	6-8 yrs.
2. GT	F	Master's	Consultant	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
3. MB	F	Doctorate	Corporate Executive Coach	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.
4. BM	M	Doctorate	VP of Learning & Development	Senior	9-15 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
5. CR	F	Doctorate	Senior Research Analyst	Senior	3-5 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
6. YP	F	Doctorate	Faculty Developer	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
7. LC	F	Doctorate	Consultant & Adj. Faculty	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.
8. KH	F	Doctorate	HR Director	Senior	9-15 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
9. HD	F	Doctorate	Sr. VP and Director of Talent Mgmt. and Learning	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.
10. NI	F	Master's	Secretary & Mgr.	Middle	6-8 yrs.	6-8 yrs.
11. FD	M	Master's	Sr. HR representative	Senior	9-15 yrs.	9-15 yrs.
12. FA	M	Master's	General Mgr.	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.
13. KC	F	Doctorate	Consultant & Adj. Faculty	Senior	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.
14. BK	F	Doctorate	Clinical Assoc. Professor	Middle	≥ 16 yrs.	≥ 16 yrs.

His HRD skillset started to become more prominent during his operation as a business partner. Traditionally, he says that he identifies more with HR management or as an HRM type of person, that he “considers the HRD side to be the soft skills and fluffy.” He believes that in order for him to effectively execute his HRM expertise, he needs to better understand and make his HRD skills more explicit. He points to the relationships between HRM, HRD, OD, and L&D, which he calls “HR,” and he believes



that “in order to effectively execute HR, you have to know all of those functional areas and those skillsets and have it in your toolkit to be effective at the role.”

In addition to carrying out his HR expertise, he also plays a pivotal role in applying research into practice. He furthered his career aspiration by enrolling in a doctoral program in human resources in workforce development and began to take courses through a blended program from a major research university. Subsequently, he started to see the merger of human resource development and human resource management. In addition, getting exposed to research and theories in his graduate work has helped make an impact on his practice. In his words, “Those are the things that are influencing the perspectives, the mindset, and this concept that you start to operate under.” His practitioner work also influences his scholarly work, making it a reciprocal process. In other words, he operates in both spaces, making him a more competent HRD scholar-practitioner.

## **GT**

GT is an experienced learning and development professional in the finance and securities, consulting, waste, oil and gas, and healthcare industries, with expertise in change management, organization development, project management, and learning solutions. Her HRD change management skillset became prominent when she was working for a learning consulting company that was working on merger projects for a financial institution. She was able to gain exposure from this merger project to assessing, designing, and delivering a project, giving her experience in learning and development and change management. She has also been consulted by an oil and gas

company that asked her to help do competency development work, which was also learning and development and change management related. GT has been recognized for her leadership and consulting work, as evidenced by various recommendations from previous team members and employers. She has over 16 years of practitioner experience.

In addition to her practitioner experience, DT also carries out scholarly work. Getting her graduate degree in human resource development helped her recognize and appreciate the differences. Although she identifies herself as an HRD scholar-practitioner, she sees herself as more on the side of learning and development. In her words, she does not like that the field is being called, HRD; in fact, she refers to it as “learning and organizational development.” Going through the coursework and going to the Academy of Human Resource Development Conference broadened her perspective and world of research and practice. She then started integrating different perspectives into her work; she tries to draw upon theories or research when she is developing practices, functions, or standards. In other words, she relies upon the research findings to help guide her practices. Another point she made was that graduate school taught her how to read and sift through articles that can be difficult to interpret as a practitioner. She credited her learning more than on the job training to making her a scholar-practitioner expert.

## **MB**

MB is an organizational change expert who has 15-plus years of experience in consulting and coaching work. She recently started her own coaching and consulting

company that provides customizable methodologies for change. Outside of her current government role as an individual corporate executive coach, she has also, as a consultant and a change agent, worked with CEOs, directors of nonprofits, and other executives, and coached them through leading change. She has taken quite a rather circuitous route. Previously, she started her career working for local government as a manager of large aquatic facilities. She then went to graduate school, where she received her MBA with a double major in finance management and business, and she eventually resigned from city government and got a job with the federal government managing multimillion dollar facilities.

As an HRD scholar-practitioner, she attributes her roots in facility management to using a large part-time staff and her experience in construction project management for building some of the foundational competencies that she uses every day. In addition to her practical experience, she is also finishing her doctoral degree in Human and Organizational Learning. Both her scholarly and practitioner expertise has helped directors of nonprofits figure out what programs to keep and what programs not to keep. Moreover, she has become the go-to person for developing human capital strategies and executive coaching. Interestingly, her work and expertise in organizational change has had a huge influence on the book that she is in the process of writing and editing.

MB discussed how she uses her scholarly knowledge as the foundational organizing principle to carry out strategies and action planning. She mentioned that she presents everything at a fifth-grade reading level. For instance, her scholarly knowledge informs her in the white board stage as she identifies a problem, the potential ways to

resolve that problem, and how to get from A to B. As she is working through the problem on the whiteboard, she will use the knowledge of some of the studies she has read on best practices, and the different theories that she has studied to give her a moment of epiphany as she is trying to solve that particular problem of practice. In other words, the scholarly part informs her actions, but the only thing that comes out and is presented to others for approval or for buy-in is the end result of that. Thus, the scholarly influences and strategies are often not recognized by her audience.

## **BM**

BM is the vice president of learning and development for a hospitality industry. He has applied expertise in the industry since 1992, giving him over 20 years of experience in designing and implementing training programs. He holds a, BS, MS, MBA, and a doctorate in Human and Organizational Learning, all of which solidify his interest in continuous learning and application. His perspectives on lifelong learning helped with promotions, but he also loved the courses, the content, and the immediate application and, as a result, is seen as an expert in the workplace learning space. BM has been recognized for his work and expertise, as evidenced by invitations to participate in industry associations, speak at conferences, teach at a university, and to publish.

As a scholar-practitioner, he diversifies himself with different research interests and disciplines, including adult education, e-Learning, HRD, instructional design, knowledge management, leadership development, training and development, and workforce development. For instance, he was able to tap into his knowledge of many fields in his technology training project. Using training modules, learning theories, and

research design, he was able to save a company tens of thousands of dollars and a lot of time and effort creating and over-building training when it was not really needed; instead, by conducting a thorough needs analysis and performance and observation of people, he was able to incorporate the exact training program that was required.

Actively reading and engaging in research helped pique his interest and influence direct application to his work. He also saw that he was becoming more and more of an expert in these fields through more exposure to research and journals, more so than the average practitioner, who does not have access or even knows that they exist. Therefore, he was able to introduce to the workplace little insights, little nuggets that were gleaned from reading a journal article or from a discussion in class. His drive for continuous learning was noticed, and because of that, he started to excel in his career and climb the ladder in different positions within the learning space.

## **CR**

CR is currently a Senior Research Analyst for a consulting company. She manages projects and drives the creation of research-based content for her company. During her time with her company, she has held positions as Senior Program Manager and Project Manager for several projects. In those roles, she developed and directed custom, best-practice research projects as well as led collaborative research projects on human capital management, knowledge management, and process management. She is an experienced consultant, trainer, and author who, through her doctoral and industry work, brings keen insights to research focused on knowledge management, human capital management, and benchmarking.

CR completed her doctorate in human resource development with a dissertation focus on knowledge management. She believed that her work around process improvement, change management, organizational change, knowledge management strategy, training and development aligned with HRD work; thus, it sparked her interest in pursuing a doctorate to further her knowledge in the field. For instance, she worked on a project around HR shared services and HR metrics collection. Her company has benchmarking metrics collection around different support processes within organizations, one of which is HR, and, within the HRD function are those parts of talent management and learning and development. Therefore, a huge part of her work is learning and development benchmarks of HRD.

Because she works for a best practices research organization and utilizes research in many human capital and knowledge management projects for clients and members, research and practice become two key parts of her role. She did interestingly note that the scholar-practitioner concept is used more in academia and is not really something that they throw around in the business world. Because research is heavily weighted in her work and organization, she understands the differences and relationships between the scholarly and practitioner worlds, which give her the ability to successfully conduct several best practices research studies and projects.

## **YP**

YP is currently a full-time faculty development expert who has over 20 years of experience supporting organizations and leaders in the areas of human resource development and organization and leadership development. She is dedicated to the

careers of professionals across all levels, races, cultures, and countries. Her dedication is shown through her commitment to lifelong learning and her support of leadership development across the country. YP has been highly recognized for her volunteer work in which she was asked to teach some critical thinking classes for women who were brought from Afghanistan or Rwanda to the United States. Her work transformed into a research interest that she continues to study, wherein she examines the levels of ability to critically think demonstrated by Afghanistan or Rwanda women who have been through wars or have been through traumatic experiences in their cultures, and she juxtaposes those findings against studies of critical thinking of women born in the United States.

YP' first exposure to human resource development was when she was teaching adults at a group exercise leadership program at the Institute for Aerobics Research. The experience spurred her interest in adult learning. She then had the opportunity to work in organizations where she had to span bridge between human resource development, the training and development pieces of the organization, and the administration of human resource management. Since the positions that she held continuously were crossing those bridges, she ended up in administrative positions where she was doing both because in most of the positions she had to wear many hats and carry out different roles. She noted that her commitment to develop herself as a leader, manager, and change agent forces her to learn continuously by engaging in research and practice.

Her expertise as a scholar and practitioner have helped provide a foundation in designing, consulting, and implementing programs and interventions in different fields and practices such as organization development, training and development, leadership

development, strategic planning, service learning, and action learning. She engages in research and practice integration on a daily work basis because teaching and developing adults require the use of research to identify and understand individual experiences.

## **LC**

LC is a learning and development professional. She is also the founder of a consulting practice that provides customized workshops, coaching engagement, and consultation work that supports learning. Although she has 30-plus years in corporate training and development, she attributed the last decade of her work to building some of the foundational competencies that she uses to support learning and development professionals today. In her work, she promotes performance-based design, scholarly practice, and emerging technologies to support learning. LC has been recognized for her work and expertise in workplace learning as evidenced by invitations to research and publish, speak at conferences, engage in professional conversations, and participate in interviews, all of which have been captured and publicized by reputable sources such as *HRD Review*, the *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *ATD*, and *Learning Solutions Magazine*.

LC has been in learning and development her entire career. She started in college leadership development doing training and development and career services in a number of different contexts. Her early career was in college student services, where she supervised the resident assistants in the residence halls. Next, she went from being a management development facilitator for an insurance company to a career developer,



where she worked doing one-on-one coaching and workshops with people who were making career changes.

As an HRD scholar-practitioner, LC works to apply theory and research to everyday practices. For instance, she researches self-directed learning theory and come up with recommendations that she shares in a book chapter, article, or conference presentation/workshop to help people learn what is necessary in order to be effective at self-directing their learning.

## **KH**

KH is currently a Human Resources Department Director at a private university whose main role includes coordination of human resources with the faculty. Her prior work experience included working as an Executive Director of Human Resources for a community college where she gained most of her HR experiences. Her first role was as an HR assistant in a newly formed HR department. She took on many responsibilities that involved recruitment and selection, collaborations with outside consultants, and management of organizational charts. During her employment at the community college, she worked on her doctorate in HRD because she always had an interest in research and writing. In fact, she noted that she is situated comfortably between both worlds because she found a happy home working in HR in higher education, which it really allows for the merging of her scholar and practitioner worlds.

KH's research interests include critical HRD, sex and gender matters in organizations, and organizational culture. She works to ensure that her research interests are embedded in everyday practice. For instance, her scholarly side of the work helps

immersed her in theory, research, and writing, which in turn helps with her practitioner work because she is always quoting articles that she reads and applying them to particular situations. She has been able to leverage her years as an HRD scholar in order to effectively carry out her practitioner work. On the other hand, her experience as a practitioner helps inform how she reads the scholarly articles and how she interprets theories and research in order to translate and apply them back to practice.

## **HD**

HD is currently the senior vice president and director of talent management and learning for a financial service company. With skill and experience in learning, talent management, talent acquisition, and HR systems, she has been able to lead the leadership and development activities for her bank. Her responsibilities include learning, developing, and mentoring. She attributed her ability to successfully develop successful leaders and practices in her HR roles to her 25-year professional career as well as an MS degree in organizational development and leadership, an MBA, and a BA in merchandising.

The first half of her 25 years in professional work was spent on the revenue and operations side of business. She was fortunate to then be placed in a job in recruiting within the HR department. She was asked to lead the college relations program, which at the time was hiring about 1000 interns a year and 2000 trainees a year. She then continued to develop experiences in the HR realm working as a senior HR project manager and then promoted to director of HR systems. She was able to experience a comprehensive end-to-end view of HR—how all of the pieces come together, from

payroll to incentives, to performance, to competency management, to selection. Those experiences made her appreciate the HRD work that encompasses organizational development, change management, competency framework, coaching and performing succession management. She then decided to specialize in talent management—learning and recruiting type of function—that as a result led her to her current position. HD has been recognized for her work, as demonstrated by invitations to speak at conferences, participation as a featured radio guest on career management, and recognition in reputable sources such as *Fortune Magazine*, *Dallas Business Journal*, and the *Dallas Morning News*.

For a financial institute that fosters learning and development, the HRD practitioner mindset works really well for her bank because they rely on facts and research to effectively serve their clients. According to HD, the research helps validate actions and approaches, and it also solidifies the credibility that her team has within the bank. Whether they decide to change or stick to a plan of action, they make the decision confidently using critical thinking skillsets and research that has already been tested. Overall, incorporating research into their daily practices saves them time and gives them the confidence they need to carry out a successful plan.

## **NI**

NI is currently pursuing a doctorate in HRD with a research focus on learning transfer. Previously, she worked as an English lecturer, teaching English courses like listening, listening comprehension, dictation, and cross-cultural analyses. She was then promoted to secretary of the English department position, where she assisted the

department head in administrative duties. Her secretary duties then evolved into a management role where she managed the lecturers and created policies for teaching standards. She continued to be recognized for her work and as a result, she was appointed to head of the English department. She will continue to serve the English department upon completion of her doctorate.

As the head of the English department, she has a passion for developing human capacity through training and development activities. When asked how a doctorate in HRD would help her practitioner work, she responded by saying that English teachers' competencies at the Indonesian institute are not at the maximum level. Therefore, having more experience on training and learning transfer, which will be the focus of her dissertation research, will better prepare her to implement training and development activities that will focus on closing the training and transfer gap. Interestingly, she believes that the research required by the doctoral program will help her answer questions about what knowledge and competencies English teachers should acquire at various types of training.

## **FD**

FD is a human resource professional and researcher with over 9 years of experience in strategic HRM, training and development, organization development, talent acquisition, payroll, compensation, and benefits. In his current role as a senior HR representative for an oil and energy company, he provides guidance and direction to management and employees on human resources issues, activities, policies, programs, and processes. Before landing in his current position, he started in the oil and gas

industry, where he worked as an HR representative, specifically as an information systems analyst for HR. After holding that position for about a year, the company moved him to an HR business partner role, where he was in charge of all the technical staff, the engineers, and the geoscientists. In addition to his practitioner work, FD is also pursuing a doctorate in HRD.

His roles as an HR representative, HR manager, and HR business partner gave him the opportunity to carry out HRM duties that included benefits, performance management, and compensation. While HRM duties remain half of his current job responsibilities, the other half focuses on supporting the director of organizational development, where he helps in formulating training programs, and developing soft skills and technical skills for engineers and geoscientists. Because of his HRD background, he is often asked to collaborate in training projects. He stated, “It seems like everywhere I go I always get put on the HRD projects while maintaining my current—my more typical role as an HRM professional.” Fortunately, he is able to integrate research and practice by utilizing theories he learned from his graduate classes to create effective adult training programs.

## **FA**

FA is a general manager of human resources for a world leading chemical distribution company. He is responsible for the policies, practices, and systems that influence employees’ performance. Previously, he was responsible for managerial development training for an oil and natural gas company. His focus was on the rapid development of managers and leaders in order to deal with the demanding challenges of

the oil industry. He played a leadership role in establishing and implementing training and development programs in finance and human resources. During more than 20 years in the oil industry, he has held different positions in the areas of human resources. His work in the area of human resources includes developing a corporate incentive program linked with corporate results, developing a model for reinforcing corporate culture and values, and developing a system that includes models for the individual performance process, competencies, individual development, and organizational development.

FA has been recognized for his achievements in HR, as demonstrated by being elected president of the National Association of Industrial Relations, serving as professor of human resource planning at a graduate school, co-authoring and authoring books related to HR, and guest speaking at numerous national and international events. He is also an active member in several organizations, serving as Board of Trustees and President Elect, within those organizations. As demonstrated by his experiences as both a scholar and practitioner, he was not hesitant in sharing his perspective on integrating research and practice into his daily work. One of the things that he learned from his studies at Cornell is that there is a lot of knowledge from the scholarly world that can be used and applied in the industry. In other words, he thinks there is a continual influx of new knowledge that can be applied constantly in the business to be innovative, efficient, and productive. Therefore, individuals and organizations have to constantly learn and research in order to keep progressing and advancing in the industry.

## **KC**

KC is a strategic business leader with experience and expertise in designing and implementing change initiatives for manufacturing, service, and education sectors. She is the founder and owner of a human resources consulting practice that focuses on areas of organizational development, strategic planning, succession planning, talent management, workforce planning, workplace e-Learning, organizational culture, culture competency training, performance management, leadership, and professional and technical development. She attributed her 30-plus years of experience as a manager of employee and communication relations in notable companies as being responsible for building the HR skills that she uses today to serve business leaders and managers in both the private and public sectors.

A true believer in lifelong learning, she holds a BA in Business Administration and Management, an MS in Adult Education with an emphasis in HRD, a PhD in Education with an emphasis in Adult Education, and a Global Professional in Human Resources Certificate. KC shares her knowledge as an HRD scholar-practitioner by serving as an adjunct faculty member. Teaching as adjunct and interacting with students has helped with her access to research as well as helped her stay up-to-date with her research. In the research realm, she is interested in employee development, specifically how employees learn the skills they learn and what motivates them to continue to learn new skills. Her doctorate research and dissertation was focused on strategic business planning and human capital staffing strategies. As a qualitative narrative researcher, she continues to use a narrative research process to glean extensive information from both

managers and employees, and her qualitative research skills substantially contribute to the investigations that she does in the workplace.

## **BK**

BK is a clinical associate professor in a higher education program, specifically with student affairs, administration, and the master's program. Before transitioning to a professorship role this past year, she worked in student activities, where she supervised a team that worked with extended orientation programs. She also did leadership programming and coordinated the student organization recognition process for the university. She stayed in that role for about 2.5 years and then was promoted to associate director. In that position, she oversaw the same team that she had been a part of in addition to the leadership and service center. It was in her role as associate director that she really started work in HRD, specifically working with staff development issues and training. BK holds a doctorate in HRD with a research interest in organizational development, focusing on professional development for staff.

When it comes to research in her academic work, she tries to intentionally incorporate her practice as a practitioner by integrating theories and research into her projects. In fact, she is a huge proponent of change theory, because she thinks that change in organizations, especially in an organization like a university, which is very bureaucratic, can take quite a bit of time, often time that people do not really have. She also noted that change theory also informs one so that he or she can respond to the changing nature of the environment while still trying to implement change. For this reason, she often uses change management theories to really inform her practice,



particularly when she seeks to influence change or to make change within her department or projects.

### **Major Findings: Categories and Themes**

I identified four categories from the data analysis: (a) personal competencies, (b) academic competencies, (c) job competencies, and (d) organizational competencies.

Table 4 presents a summary of major findings from this study. Each category and the corresponding themes are supported by direct quotes in the following sections.

#### **Personal Competencies**

This category relates to how my participants described the personal competencies that enabled them to be a competent professional, especially in the area of research and practice. High-performing HR professionals understand the general abilities they need to get the job done well. They understand the importance to learn continuously. They have effective interpersonal skills. They are flexible and honest when communicating with key stakeholders, and they employ this positive chemistry to influence positive business results. Four themes emerged in this category: (a) continuous learning, (b) social acumen, (c) flexibility, and (d) values and ethics competency. Table 5 provides an overview of the personal competencies and representative quotes that help explain each one. In this study, participants discussed personal competencies as essential for everyday life roles because they are generally learned and acquired at home and practiced in the workplace. In turn, participants view them as not exclusive to the competencies needed to be successful in the workplace.

Table 4

*Summary of Major Findings*

Category	Theme	Definition
Personal Competencies	Continuous learning (14)	Ongoing development of knowledge, skill, and ability through learning on the job, at school, and at home.
	Social acumen (9)	Building and maintaining effective working and professional relationships with people who are, or might someday be, helpful in achieving work-related goals.
	Flexibility (4)	Being able to adapt, think, and respond quickly to changing situations.
	Values & ethics (2)	Having a strong awareness of personal code of conduct that is regarded as the honesty of one's actions.
Academic Competencies	Scholarly communication (14)	Communicating scholarly information of theory and research in written and oral form to all stakeholders.
	Subject matter knowledge (9)	Understanding theories and their application.
	Research competency (9)	Demonstrating knowledge and skill regarding both quantitative and qualitative design and analysis.
	Research dissemination (7)	Sharing research through publications, blogs, and conference presentations.
	Critical thinking (4)	Processing information to make better decisions and understand problems better from different viewpoints.
Job Competencies	Theory-to-practice ability (14)	Applying and linking theory and/or research to practice.
	Role confidence (14)	Achieving a satisfactory level of technical skill or knowledge in a role-related area.
	Collaboration (8)	Working within one's team and with other stakeholders to create alignment and to achieve a common goal.
	Training skill (7)	Assessing needs, developing, and teaching other new skills and knowledge.
	Problem solving (5)	Using analytical or creative thinking skills to identify and solve problems by understanding the situation, evaluating alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate course of action.
	Systems thinking (5)	Understanding how things fit together by examining the relationships and interactions of every element within a system.
	Strategic thinking (4)	Understanding how things fit together by examining the relationships and interactions of every element within a system.
	Facilitation skill (4)	Guiding and managing a group to ensure group participation is met and objectives are achieved effectively
	Multicultural knowledge (2)	Having a strong awareness of one's own value while adapting to other cultures, demonstrating non-judgmental respect for others, and appreciating individual commonalities and differences.
Organizational Competencies	Business acumen (14)	Having a keen understanding of the business and external and internal factors that influence business success.
	Customer focus (14)	Meeting the needs of stakeholders.
	Management skill (8)	Decision-making, planning, and monitoring of projects, time, and people.
	Leadership skill (7)	Influencing others to accomplish goals and directing the organization in ways that makes it more unified and coherent.

Table 5

*Personal Competency Themes*

Category	Theme	Representative Quotes
Personal Competencies	Continuous learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think you need to be engaged in some lifelong learning...” (BK)</li> <li>• “I just loved learning and loved school, so I always had a perspective of lifelong learning” (MB)</li> <li>• “I try to continuously learn, have openness or a willingness to learn. I think honing in on that openness to learn and engaging in professional development will open your mind more” (KH)</li> </ul>
	Social Acumen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think one is to surround yourself by others who do it well. ‘I’ve surrounded myself with people who challenge me and push me and make me want to be better at what I do, and being better means incorporating scholarship into my work and incorporating theory” (BK)</li> <li>• “Having connections – I guess in my academic background or the exposure that you get from being one foot in the academic world and one foot in the business world allow you to have double amount of resources at your disposal” (BM)</li> <li>• “I would say the very first and to me the foremost [priority] is to build their interwork. Network and build their relationships with other HRD scholars and practitioners.” (KC)</li> </ul>
	Ethics & Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And you need ethics. You need to understand behavior” (KC)</li> <li>• “Ethics and values competencies are as important as the other core competencies” (HD)</li> <li>• “So there’s always a balance between the legal thing to do and the business side of being able to run the business. How do you maintain that integrity?” (FD)</li> </ul>
	Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You might have to be flexible and [try to determine] how can they understand this if they’re not getting it the first two times” (GT)</li> <li>• “Sometimes it doesn't work, so I try my own practice, and then (adapt) the theory...so a trial and error things with the ideas that I have in my head” (NI)</li> </ul>

**Continuous learning.** All 14 participants acknowledged continuous learning as influencing their work. Phrases used by the participants included *lifelong learning*, *self-development*, *seeking opportunities*, and *willingness to learn*. In this study’s context, *continuous learning* is defined as the ongoing development of knowledge, skill, and ability through learning on the job, at school, and at home.

BK explained that her work requires her to learn continuously. Because of the nature of her work and the learning required for it, BK believed that HRD scholar-practitioners “need to be engaged in some lifelong learning, continual professional development, and self-reflection.” Additionally, she suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners need to “educate (themselves) around the topics that are important to the work that (they) do,” because doing so will assist with the transfer of knowledge to practice. Further, in the area of continuous learning, she shared her experience and stressed the importance of seeking opportunities to learn:

I think my second piece of advice is find ways to practice...That might be through conversations with a supervisor or one of these trusted colleagues. You know, I think about the students, they all hold graduate assistantships and they're working and they're learning about theory.

MB echoed this theme, by sharing his love for learning:

I just loved learning and loved school, so I always had a perspective of lifelong learning...It did come back and helped me with promotions and, obviously, [to] get to the spot where I'm at today, and a lot of that is attributed to the fact that I'm continuing to learn and better myself.

Similarly, KH stressed the importance of learning from other HRD scholar-practitioners.

I try to continuously learn. I try not to get bogged down in my own research interests and [I] think about how I can expand those interests across discipline and across research areas, and so I'm always wanting to learn more from our HR colleagues and what they're working on.

In summary, these and similar comments made by the participants support continuously learning as a competency. This personal competency is usually developed when participants recognize the need to continuously improve themselves and recognizes the need to change personal behaviors, search for opportunities, and actively seek feedback. All 14 participants noted the importance of continuous learning; as one HRD scholar-practitioner mentioned, “There has to be a level of personal learning.” Here, SD suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners have to want and be driven to learn because learning is key to both individual and organizational development.

**Social acumen.** Five of the 14 participants indicated that social acumen plays a huge role their work. The participants described social acumen as *interpersonal skills*, *relationship building*, and *network building*. In this study’s context, *social acumen* is the process of building and maintaining effective working and professional relationships with people who are, or might someday be, helpful in achieving work-related goals.

KC’s explanation of social acumen may help HRD scholar-practitioners build the networks they need to work in this fast-paced society. In fact, she argued that relationship building is not at the level where it was when she started her career. She said that people would share all kinds of information on social media, but when they sit down with their colleagues in a networking environment, they are guarded. Additionally, she claimed that from a relationship building standpoint, technology has not really benefited people in the human resources area. She provided an example from her earlier career in which she belonged to some human resources associations where people would share what was going on in their companies and the challenges that they were facing. She

claimed that today people are much more guarded, which to her is a paradoxical phenomenon because people will write all over social media, yet when they sit down to problem solve with people who can help them, they do not share in the same way in which they are accustomed.

Furthermore, in the realm of leadership, KC noted the importance of networking building and its impact on leadership work.

You know and as far as leadership, I think leadership skills require relationship building and the integration of what the person knows and what their colleagues also know. The collaboration and the sharing of knowledge. They need to build their network.

Actually, both KC and BM discussed how social networks can permeate throughout the work of HRD scholar-practitioners. For example, BM commented:

I guess [with] my academic background [and] the exposure that you get from being one foot in the academic world and one foot in the business world. [I] now have almost double [the] amount of resources at [my] disposal...and it makes a huge difference and sometimes saves a lot of time. So, I'm able to bring those connections in, so that's another big-need area for scholar-practitioners.

In other words, BM suggested that social acumen allows HRD scholar-practitioners to develop their professional networks. Another key important reason for social acumen is that it gives the scholar-practitioners the opportunity to share opinions and to expand their sphere of influences. Similarly, BK suggested that it would be worthwhile for

HRD scholar-practitioners to expand their professional networks by associating themselves with others who will push them to be better. BK said:

I have gone to [a professional] and said, “Will you please mentor me,” but more [than that]. I've surrounded myself with people who challenge me and push me and make me want to be better at what I do, and being better means incorporating scholarship into my work and incorporating theory and making sure that it's grounded in something other than “this is a great idea.”

In summary, relationship building, network building, and interpersonal skills all manifest themselves in social acumen. HRD scholar-practitioners with social acumen get the most out of their networks by building durable, trusting relationships that they can turn to for help. For instance, BM shared the practicality of his networks: “You have names of individuals and you have names of experts that you can reach out to and I've used that on so many occasions whether it is authors or consulting firms or publishers.” BM and the other participants share similar stories in that their innate desire to work with diverse individuals has helped them build networks that often extend beyond the business to include clients, colleagues, and members of the same professional organizations.

**Ethics and integrity.** Four of the 14 participants acknowledge flexibility as influencing their work. Other phrases used by the participants to describe this theme included *ethics* and *social responsibility* and *moral responsibility*. In this study's context, *ethics* is defined as a set of standardized rules for conducting oneself morally;

and *integrity* is defined as a personal code of conduct that is regarded as the honesty of one's actions.

Most professionals exercise integrity, but some are vulnerable when ethical issues arise in the workplace. There are many reasons why ethics and integrity can become a problem for HRD scholar-practitioners. FD argued that HRD scholar-practitioners need to demonstrate fair, honest, and ethical behaviors because they can work with top management who are vulnerable to the subject. He shared an example in which top management did not adhere to ethical standards. The problem can be that managers lack the solutions for the issues of how to balance moral demands and business realities, which can be conflicting at times. HD said, "Ethics and values competencies are as important as the other core competencies." Meaning that social responsibility, although assumed, can be forgotten when managers get confused about their work and self-interests.

In circumstances where ethical dilemmas arise, HRD scholar-practitioners must work hard and seriously consider the costs of attending to doing what is right. They also need to assist managers in maintaining the balancing required in difficult situations where every alternative has ethical, social, or financial costs. HRD scholar-practitioners must understand their environment. In addition, as KC said about ethics and the business environment, "You need to understand behavior." FD concluded with a question for HRD scholar-practitioners to consider when faced with ethical issues: "There is always a balance between the legal thing to do and the business side of being able to run the business. How do you maintain that integrity?"



**Flexibility.** Two of the 14 participants acknowledge flexibility as influencing their work. Even if only two of participants discussed this theme, GT and NI made strong cases to consider flexibility as an important factor influencing HRD scholar-practitioner' adaptation to day-to-day changes in the workplace. Another word used by the participants to describe flexibility was "adaptability." In this study's context, *flexibility* is about being able to adapt, think, and respond quickly to changing situations.

GT gave a strong example of how being flexible, yet persistent, can gain business support that leads to project success. She shared an anecdote in which she was leading a learning and organization development program and function that she started from the ground up. She recalled the experience as an exciting one for her because she completely transformed the company's perception of learning and development and how they perceived learning and development practitioners. She said that they did not even realize it was an existing body of knowledge that people went to school to study. They really did not see the value of learning and development because they thought it was just an HR thing. Even when the company hired GT to lead and develop this learning and development program, it took her about a year to get the engineers aligned and making decisions. Because the company was full of engineers who were science-minded, GT felt that she would have to get in their mindset and give them a bunch of research statistics to prove what the company needed to do. However, the response was quite different from what she anticipated. The response was, the engineers disparaged her research and told her that it sounded like a bunch of textbook and journal stuffs. In other words, the engineers thought what GT provided them would not work. She then took a

different approach and brought in people from other companies and industries that she knew who experts in learning and development and she had a roundtable discussion. The engineers were impressed, but they still did not buy-in to the idea because the learning and development specialists from other companies were not in the oil and gas industry.

Finally, GT worked with some key stakeholders with whom she had good relationship and got them on board. She did so by demonstrating what her work could look like using the Myers-Briggs Test. The stakeholders then convinced their chief procurement officers to essentially participate and be responsible in this pilot study. The pilot test was a success, and GT credited gaining support and participation to her ability to be flexible and persistent. She shared her reasoning for being flexible:

All I remember is being flexible and persistent. You have to know I can't just keep cramming down [their throats], "You have to do this, because this is what the research says or this is the evidence-based practice." You're gonna shut them down. You might have to be flexible and say, "How can they understand this if they're not getting it the first two times?" And then, you know, that's kind of the go back, but then when you have enough credibility and expertise behind you, now you can actually come forward and say, "Okay, guys, this is what we need to do."

GT concluded that the ability to be persistent and flexible will assist HRD scholar-practitioners in coping effectively with change and embracing people's diverse behaviors. GT said:

There is one thing to be persistent, but there is another thing to be persistent and flexible. So, you can't be persistent and say you have to do this my way. This is the way we're going to do it. It's, you know, I call it push-pull, so if they push back on you, then you have to pull back and okay, they're not ready for that yet, give them time or figure out a way...[to] get this across to them so they can appreciate it. And so I think that's where it's the flexible, it's persistent and flexible and knowing when to push and pull.

Recognizing and adapting to one's working environment also surfaced in a discussion when NI recalled her experience working at a small Indonesian campus in a remote area. She said that a small, remote campus like hers can differ substantially from a province school because the curriculum and resources can hinder learning and participation for her students. Thus, she had to learn to be flexible with the resources and supports she has to implement learning activities for students and training programs for teachers so that students at her can gain the same education as those students who are in the province schools. To do so, she always reads, applies, and shares new knowledge. However, the knowledge acquired and the theories learned from her readings and research may not always be applicable to a small, remote context like her campus. Thus, NI is flexible and adapts those new ideas to fit her work. She said, "Sometimes it doesn't work, so I try my own practice, and then [adapt] the theory...so a trial and error approach with the ideas that I have in my head."

In summary, both GT and NI find flexibility important to HRD scholar-practitioners' work. Both of them had to show great flexibility when undertaking their

work. They had to adapt to their work environment and the people embedded in them to gain successful supports. In addition to flexibility, GT aligned persistence with flexibility. Although GT has to be flexible in her work, she also has to be persistence by finishing what she started despite the obstacles. NI also implied in the aforementioned quote that it takes persistence to get a job done well. She does not allow the many problems her campus faces to prevent her from developing students and teachers. Instead, she maintains an optimistic outlook and commits to solving problems, even if some potential solutions fail.

### **Academic Competencies**

HRD professionals understand research and theory. This category relates to how the HRD scholar-practitioners view the academic competencies that enabled them to be a competent professional, especially in the area of research, theory, scholarly communication, and critical thinking. High-performing HR professionals understand the prerequisite skills, abilities, and behaviors they need to carry out research and communicate it in ways that are understandable and accepted by practitioners. They use critical thinking to perceive the world and to enhance their everyday work. I identified five themes in this category: (a) scholarly communication, (b) subject informatics, (c) research knowledge, (d) scholarly dissemination, and (e) critical thinking skills. I provide an overview of the academic competencies along with representative quotes in Table 6. This category contains critical academic competencies that HRD scholar-practitioners indicated impact their work. These competencies are primarily learned in

an academic setting and are likely to influence how HRD scholar-practitioners ask questions, seek knowledge, and receive feedback.

Table 6

*Academic Competency Themes*

Category	Themes	Representative Quotes
Academic Competencies	Scholarly Communication (14)	<p>“It’s understanding what the theories are saying and interpreting that for practice and making leaps that go perhaps a little bit beyond or [are] a little bit different from, what the research is saying in order to make it practical and applicable to the context that you’re working in.” (LC)</p> <p>“It’s not about academic writing, but it’s about corporate business writing, being able to tell a compelling story in order to get people to take action.” (MB)</p> <p>“I think that’s the biggest thing for academic[s] and for the scholars is to make sure that there’s a ‘so what’ to their research and that they’re speaking the language of their intended audiences in that industry.” (CR)</p> <p>“I think you also have to be an effective communicator so with that I think you have to know how to translate scholarship into plain English for the audience that you’re dealing with.” (SD)</p>
	Research Skill (9)	<p>“It’s a huge piece of it...just understanding the importance of research and research methodology because I know not everybody has been trained in research.” (CR)</p> <p>“I think being familiar with the concepts of research methodology and process” (GT)</p>
	Scholarly Dissemination (9)	<p>“I’m responsible for the training offerings for both conferences now. And then in May we have our annual knowledge management conference” (CR)</p> <p>DH</p>
	Subject Matter Knowledge (7)	<p>“But I guess it also brings to bear the importance of some kind of subject knowledge which I didn’t have... Whatever the foundational theories are I think would be helpful.” (CR)</p> <p>“You need kind of an overarching exposure to the different facets of our field and also how they fit together.” (GT)</p>
	Critical Thinking (4)	<p>“I’d rather hire somebody with critical thinking, and then teach them the technical skills rather than have somebody who’s technically really skilled and try to teach them how to think critically” (MB)</p> <p>“I would say critical thinking skills is probably primary” (KH)</p> <p>“They were absolutely critical thinkers. They approached everything from a cerebral kind of perspective...” (HD)</p> <p>“Instead of the activities, I found it very interesting when we were trying to integrate critical thinking skills into some of the action learning activities” (YP)</p>

**Scholarly communication.** All 14 participants identified scholarly communication as one of the most significant competency for HRD scholar-practitioners to possess in order to effectively translate scholarly language to practitioners. Other words or phrases used by the participants to describe scholarly communication included *translation, scholarly language* and *speaking the language*. In this study, scholarly communication is defined as the process of communicating scholarly information of theory and research in written and oral form to all stakeholders.

This theme was most popular with the participants. All 14 participants argued that communication highlights the gap between scholars and practitioners. In other words, the link between scholars' findings and practitioners' application of research are not always strong. Interestingly, the participants claimed that they commit themselves to communicating research findings in a digestible and usable language for practitioners to easily comprehend. Their efforts are highlighted in this section because they offer a diverse range of avenues for understanding scholarly communication.

LC balanced research with launching and directing her own learning and development consulting firm that aims to link personal, customized, and research-based approaches to business needs. Based on her expertise in research and consulting, LC emphasized a set of skills related to communication that cannot be left out when discussing HRD scholar-practitioners' competencies.

If we try to use academic terminology to talk to business leaders, we will likely not be very successful. We have to learn to understand our own field but then turn that language around into relatable technology for the people that we're

working with. And, that applies to both our written communications and our oral communications. We have to know how to simplify, we have to know how to make good pictures you know, graphics that explain what we're trying to do and why. So that translation piece is what is really hard to get to as a practitioner and hard to actually write as a scholar-practitioner for others.

In reference to scholar-practitioner communication, MB also discussed the ability to get buy-in from the stakeholders who sponsor the implementation of the plan or approve the planning. Additionally, she said that it is not about academic writing, but it is about corporate business writing, being able to tell a compelling story in order to get people to take action. MB is able to tell a compelling story by not citing theoretical articles. Here, she alluded:

I'll use the knowledge of some of the studies I've read or the best practices, and the different theories that I've studied to give me an 'aha' moment as I'm trying to solve that particular problem of practice. But other than that, the scholarly work does not really go into the work because as a practitioner if you insert too much scholarly work into the actual communications around what you're doing to get buy-in, and leadership approval, and funding, and all of that, you're accused of being too academic, and that's not a good thing in the practice world. So, I try to become the conduit to translate theory that I know into practice, and help insure that I'm going to be successful, and not fall into the trap of doing what's always been done. I don't use [textbook phrases], steps for change management for instance. I know that there's a lot more out there, I know about

complexity, and complexity and change management, and other theories. So I'm able to have all of those in my brain, and synthesize that, and put out a customized solution for the custom problem that I'm working [on] that informs by theory, but [is] not academic in any sense of the word as it gets translated out to others.

Similarly, CR mentioned the need for HRD scholar-practitioners to sort through information and identify what is relevant to their clients' work. She said, "My clients just don't care about scholarly, lofty stuff at all. They want to understand what works. They want it written in a reasonable understandable language."

In summary, scholarly literature can be intimidating and confusing to practitioners. As a result, HRD scholar-practitioners need the ability to balance the scholarly information and the practitioner understanding when communicating to a practitioner audience. Given that scholars immerse themselves in scholarly literature and research, the language in scholarly writing is specialized, and often requires research or academic knowledge on part of the readers. Under these circumstances, HRD scholar-practitioners should not assume that the practitioner audience is familiar with academic jargons; instead, scholar-practitioners need to take scholarly information and translate it in practitioners' layman terms. As SD suggested, they need "to know how to translate scholarship into plain English for the audience that they're dealing with."

**Research skill.** Nine of the 14 participants recognized research skill as important in their work. Other phrases used by the participants to describe this theme included *research knowledge* and *research methodology and methods*. In this study's



context, *research skill* involves demonstrating knowledge and skill regarding both quantitative and qualitative designs and analyses.

Participants recognize the importance of research and evidence-based practice in their work. In the realm of practice, HRD scholar-practitioners understand the importance of research in generating knowledge. They learn how to determine the most appropriate research methodology that will help them make better decisions. For instance, according to NI, the use of trial and error as an approach to problem solving used to be the most common means of identifying what worked and what did not work. She had helped replaced the trial and error approach by improving practices with new knowledge that becomes available through tests and quantitative data or from understanding individuals' socially constructed world. In other words, as an HRD scholar-practitioner, NI had learned that the way a question is approached will have a profound impact on the way individuals and organizations construct their problems. Participants emphasized that the types of research design and methods undertaken can have a huge impact on the research question. Although research skills are inherent in practitioners and usually increase with experience, the skills of qualitative and quantitative approaches can be learned. Participants suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners should assist organizational stakeholders in learning more about the different research methodologies and in better understanding their contribution to the decision-making process. Therefore, understanding the appropriate use of research methods and methodologies is vital to conducting robust research.

RC works in a research consulting company, and it is a given that research is a part of her work, and having research skills is an essential component of her HRD scholar-practitioner's competency. RC shared how her company utilizes research:

We also, in terms of the scholar piece, have a strong emphasis on the research methodology. So, I guess if we were to get technical about this study, it would be a mixed methods sequential study. But we don't call it that because nobody would –nobody other than me might understand what that means. But it means we're doing a survey and that's going to be part of my interviews. We follow a pretty rigorous methodology.

FA shared how using an appropriate research methodology had helped saved the company money and time. He is currently conducting a focus group:

The other thing we have done a lot of research and work in is virtual learning and the process of learning. How do you learn? And we're working at the moment with a group in Amsterdam which is more experiential learning—leadership by doing. And that's another of the areas that we're developing. Also, [we're] in the process of understanding the organization and climate and how the employees' perceptions influence that. And with meetings with the employees and focus groups, we've tried to understand how they're both related and how we can influence on that part.

To be effective in improving business outcomes, knowledge that is evidence-based is needed. For this reason, the participants argued that HRD scholar-practitioners

need to be competent in evaluating the applicability of their findings to the work environment.

**Scholarly dissemination.** Nine of the 14 participants argued that scholarly dissemination is necessary in HRD scholar-practitioner work. Other words used by the participants to describe this theme included *literature contribution*, and *research access*. In this study's context, *scholarly dissemination* is the process by which researchers share their research through publications, blogs, and conference presentations.

Nine of the 14 participants agreed that scholars need to do a better job of disseminating research results. Specifically, they believed that researchers have a responsibility to share new knowledge with both the practitioners and the general public. Scholarly dissemination becomes a challenge because the audience for HRD research is diverse; thus, dissemination has to meet the various requirements of different users. Barriers to dissemination include the prolonged process of publishing in academic journals and practitioners' limited access to scholarly databases. GT discussed the challenge of communication between scholars and practitioners. She called for development of effective dissemination strategies that can bridge the communication gap between scholars and practitioners.

So I think [research access] is a challenge. That's going back to the practitioner challenge. I brought this challenge up with the HRD scholar-practitioner [group], whether you have your grad degree or not—even if you have your grad degree [loss of privilege] eventually leaves where you don't have access to those libraries. So the information you get is pretty much from the practitioner level. I

continue my professional membership with AHRD and also with ISDI, to get access to the journal. So even if I did continue professional memberships to get access to all of the HRD-related journals, I wouldn't have time to read them all.

Talking about the dissemination challenge, GT also mentioned that research that actually makes it to publication can be pretty dense and difficult to comprehend. Similarly, CR stated that articles published in practitioner journals can be more relatable and useful:

Many times, I find the practitioner article more useful. Sometimes the scholarly articles will be long and difficult to follow; [therefore], I just kind of flip through [the article] to get to the results page.

Effective scholarly dissemination requires a vigorous strategy that ensures that information is dispersed effectively among different users. As previously mentioned, the different dissemination approaches can include publications, blogs, and conference presentations. BM shared his role in disseminating research:

I do go to conferences. I present at certain conferences. I will do workshops, and I'm actually speaking at two in the near future. Being a scholar-practitioner, it allows you to do more. No one is going and presenting a paper they wrote or conducting research with a peer and then presenting findings. Nobody's doing that in the work world. And so what I do is I do go to those conferences. I do read the journals, especially if it's something that is interesting and relevant to what I do, and I share that, and because it's timely information, it's sometimes treated as gold, especially in my organization, and because I do that, I have kind of the open ticket to continue doing that.

Although HRD scholar-practitioners make efforts to share their knowledge, they need to be cognizant to the dissemination barriers. As noted by participants, some academic journals are not effective in influencing practice. LC addressed this issue by posting blogs to disseminate information in a range of creative, context-appropriate ways for readers.

What I generally find challenging is that research tends to be very focused on small issues. In order to make a manageable research project, we ask narrow research questions. So one of the things that I do, for example, in my spare time, is I write blog posts for the association for talent development [that are] related to the academy and HRD literature. So I'll take an article from AHRD's journal and I will put it in English, right? I will say, okay, so this is a research study that did this thing and said this, and this is why it applies, this is why practitioners should pay attention to that. What I find is it's very difficult to find articles that in and of themselves are applicable, because they're so narrow in their focus.

**Subject matter knowledge.** Seven of the 14 participants acknowledged subject matter knowledge as influencing their work. Other words used by the participants to describe subject matter knowledge included *foundational knowledge* and *theoretical reflection*. In this study's context, *theoretical knowledge* is defined as understanding theories and their application.

Having good theoretical or foundational knowledge of the field is another important component of being an HRD scholar-practitioner. There may be a natural temptation to view this theme from the perspective of an individual's view of the world

or knowledge of truth. For instance, the world of college professors is supposedly so different from the world of the corporate trainer that they are viewed as employing fundamentally different mindsets and theories in their daily work. BM said, “The college professor doesn’t understand because her view is purely theoretical.” On the other hand, “the practitioner isn’t qualified to reason about a particular problem” (FD) because they carry out actions without reflection and research support. According to the participants, theoretical knowledge is essential for practice because it allows for a deeper understanding of context.

Having good theoretical knowledge, or subject knowledge, also surfaced in a discussion when CR recalled being challenged by integrating research and practice:

I don’t think that study was as successful. But I guess it also brings to bear the importance of some kind of subject knowledge which I didn’t have. Whatever the foundational theories are, I think, would be helpful. Keeping abreast of some of that theory, I think, would be very helpful if you’re on the practitioner side.”

Her comments on the importance of foundational knowledge were echoed by GT.

I think having a good, strong awareness of not everything, from our fields but having a good overarching or having a good basic understanding. I would say in particular the difference between each of the theories and knowledge; whether it’s learning OD, performance improvement, knowledge management, training delivery, but yet being grounded in each of those, and you don’t have to be an expert.

FA concluded his message to future HRD scholar-practitioners by stating, “I think that the most important thing is you have to be open to what's going on in your field.” He mentioned that at the moment he is doing research on incentive systems to find out what is new and how it can inform his current project.

According to the participants, subject matter knowledge is as equally important as practical knowledge. Scholars exercise subject matter knowledge that often is not practical for a particular problem; on the other hand, practitioners take actions that do not involve theoretical support. The dichotomy made by participants reinforces the idea that having at least a basic, foundational knowledge of different theories in the field can assist HRD scholar-practitioners in applying theory and research to practice. For instance, FD said, “I think having the frameworks of HRD, training and development, organizational development, and career development have assisted me in developing successful programs.” In general, subject matter knowledge has practical implication because it is faster to discuss problems and probable solution than it is to prove the solution.

**Critical thinking.** Four of the 14 participants acknowledged critical thinking as important in their work. Another phrase used by the participants to describe critical thinking was *critical analysis*. *Critical thinking* is defined in this study’s context as purposely processing information to make better decisions and understand problems better from different viewpoints.

Participants noted that their graduate courses had helped them become better critical thinkers. Critical thinking activities have helped them to understand why

something has occurred as opposed to just understanding what has occurred. In other words, they have learned to analyze and evaluate information from a critical standpoint by challenging what is already known; they do so by breaking down information and re-assembling them into new ideas. They also are able to take these new and creative ideas and use them to make high-level decisions.

Successful executives use critical thinking skills every day to examine complex problems, to ask effective questions, and to espouse the information they have to make the right business decisions. HD identified two critical thinkers who work at her firm:

They were absolutely critical thinkers. They approached everything from a cerebral kind of perspective which didn't always win friends because Mark and Steve constantly challenged the status quo by asking: Why does that work? Why do you think so? How can we prove that? How can we validate that? And I think that kind of drove some people crazy. But it absolutely helped the business.

Successful consultants with critical thinking skills will ask the right questions to their clients so that they can best meet their needs. YP was successful in practicing critical thinking skills, which in turn, made her more effective in meeting the challenges of the continuously changing needs of her students and participants. She shared:

I was asked to teach some critical thinking classes for the women that we brought from Afghanistan or Rwanda to the United States. Instead of the activities, I found it very interesting when we were trying to integrate critical thinking skills into some of the action learning activities. After the whole thing, I had two



different people walk up to me at that training [who] said the same thing to me, [which was that] not anyone could have just come in there and taught that. It was obvious I was using some higher-level thinking.

Critical thinking as KH noted, is a skill that cannot be learned overnight. Therefore, HRD scholar-practitioners need to adopt the right attitude and mindset when contemplating difficult questions. KH stated:

I think sometimes we get wrapped up in the tasks, the daily tasks in our lives and we don't take a step back and look at it at a deeper level. This is kind of what I mean in terms of critical thinking in that you really analyze that task or that function or whatever it may be on a practice level with the knowledge that you have of your research and theory on the scholarly side. So I think being able to do that [is] something that I think is taught and learned overtime.

### **Job Competencies**

HRD professionals understand the work context—the social, political, cultural, and technical aspects that impact their work. They understand the importance of theory-to-work application and the factors that can influence their ability to integrate research and practice. Competencies included in this domain represent those skills and abilities that allow individuals to function successfully in their job. As with the academic competencies, these are generally learned and practiced on the job. Nine themes were reported: (a) role confidence, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) systems thinking, (d) strategic thinking, (e) training skills, (f) facilitation skills, (g) collaboration skill, (h) theory-to-practice ability, and (i) multicultural knowledge (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Job Competency Themes*

Category	Themes	Representative Quotes
Job Competencies	Theory-to-practice ability	<p>“How you take the knowledge you learned and apply that to people; and then how we take that ‘five values concept’ and apply that to your career. You want to see that scholarship applied in the workplace.” (SD)</p> <p>“Putting theory into practice in a very large organization like mine has a whole other dynamic of organizational politics that come into play, and there’s a whole other ballgame.” (BM)</p>
	Role confidence	<p>“There is first of all, a bit of role confidence. You have to know how to do your job. You've got to know some of the research in your field, you've got to know the practices of whatever you do; if you're a designer, you have to know how to design. If you're a facilitator, you have to know how to facilitate. If you're a manager you have to know how to consult.” (LC)</p> <p>“In order to effectively execute HR, you have to know all of those functional areas and those skillsets and have it in your toolkit to be effective at the role.” (SD)</p>
	Collaboration skill	<p>“I collaborate very closely with our HR department, and they're building a solution that we'll be responsible for implementing.” (MB)</p> <p>“Every HRD position I've had, it's been a part of organizations that have teams of HRD people that are highly qualified and educated.” (YP)</p> <p>“The teamwork that we should have in an organization is very important to having a sustainable and successful project.” (NI)</p>
	Training skill	<p>“Right now, I'm working on a series with our training department of supervisory training, seeing what we can do when it directs to online training for supervisor compliance training.” (FD)</p> <p>“So, I think that the training that they conducted did not produce a maximum result for the learning transfer itself.” (NI)</p>
	Problem-solving skills	<p>“I definitely consider myself a problem solver. When people ask me what I do for a living, [I tell them] it basically [involves] solv[ing] problems and set[ting] people up for success.” (MB)</p> <p>“Problem solving for sure is a day-to-day activity I have to engage in at work.” (BM)</p>
	Systems thinking	<p>“I'm taking a whole bunch of different disparate pieces of information and creating a visual representation and a strategic plan to incorporate all of these pieces of information and create a path forward.” (MB)</p> <p>“I'm a big proponent of systems thinking.” (GT)</p>
	Strategic planning & thinking	<p>“Managing what we call vision and mission and driving for results because if I cannot show that primarily, then the business will have no regard or respect for my abilities.” (HD)</p> <p>“And, it's something that has no relation to your industry, no relation to your thing, but you see there something of value for your business.” (FA)</p> <p>“[It is] imagining the potential and envisioning the endgame or the end product and being able to help my client see what's possible down the road and guiding him or her toward the right solution to invest in when we have to build learning.” (MB)</p>
	Facilitation skill	<p>“You need to be able to influence...it's facilitation. So how do you now take that scholarship and facilitate implementation or transition and how do you apply it and make it work?” (SD)</p> <p>“He was pacing around in the group. It was really making everyone very nervous. I thought, 'I've got to redirect him or this is going to explode.' I started redirecting him using what I knew about theory and adult learning, and trying to apply some models, trying to get him more engaged.” (YP)</p>
	Multicultural knowledge	<p>“Diversity and culture sensitivity are necessary and what you hear in today's news reminds us just as much that it is an important quality to have.” (HD)</p> <p>“I'm able to reach out and offer that to other people that might be interested in learning about multiculturalism” (YP)</p>

**Theory-to-practice ability.** All participants discussed theory to practice as inevitable in their work. In this study's context, *theory-to-practice ability* involves effectively applying and linking theory and/or research to practice.

The ability to apply theory to practice was widely discussed by participants. Given that these HRD scholar-practitioners value evidence-based practice, theory-to-practice application is inevitable in their daily work. That said, participants suggested that knowing the foundational theories in the field is critical because one can refer to them when one needs to quickly apply them to a decision-making or planning process. MB provided an example in which she was able to quickly draw on theories she knows to assist her in a strategic planning process:

So I was able to shut myself in a room with a blackboard or a whiteboard and draw on theory around adult learning. Knowing that experiential learning and the opportunities for just-in-time job aids, and things like that were more positively received by adults when learning something new. Additionally, the theories around employee and internal communication, and the theories around simple rules for change, and around the complexity change management component, and things like that. I had all of those things swimming in my head and was able to, over the course of the day, in a strategic planning session, whiteboard out what that framework was going to look like in practice based on all of these disparate theories that were swimming around in my head.

GT echoed MB's point on having a basic understanding of the different theories behind the theory-to-practice ability. She stated:

Having a good basic understanding, I would say, in particular [about] the difference between each of the fields—whether it’s learning OD, performance improvement, knowledge management, training delivery—but yet being grounded in each of those is integral to theory-to-practice ability.

Specifically, FA mentioned that applying theory to practice has helped with innovation, efficiency, and productivity. He said, “There is so much knowledge, and you have to apply it constantly in the business to innovate and then be more efficient and productive.” In addition to theoretical application, FA also discussed how research can be used to influence change and improve ideas:

Normally we try to solve it the same way that we have done it, or we keep doing the same things. Hey is there a better way? What is research saying about that? From that you will always get some ideas of how to improve and how to make the changes.

Additionally, BM discussed the importance of experience as the other role in putting theory into practice. He indicated that the ability to apply theory to practice can be quite different in a large organization than in smaller organizations. He said, “Putting theory into practice in a very large organization like mine has a whole other dynamic of organizational politics that come into play and there’s a whole other ballgame.”

He said having some experience navigating a very large company structure and seeing how intricate an organization is will assist HRD scholar-practitioners in determining where they can make an impact using research and theory. His specific advice was, “If you’re going to be a scholar-practitioner in a big organization, be patient,

and you have to play a very political game, and that political game, you don't learn how to do that in school, you learn in the job. That's how life gets to work.”

**Role confidence.** In this study's context, *role confidence* is defined as achieving a satisfactory level of technical skill or knowledge in a role-related area. Eight of the 14 participants recognized research skill as important in their work. Other phrases used by the participants to describe this theme included *technical skills* and *job knowledge*.

Role confidence includes activities that involve understanding the technical language and various components of the job, using technical skills and knowledge on the job, and staying aware of developments and trends in the HRD field. Individuals with technical skills are often more confident in their jobs than those without them. Participants indicated that sufficient technical ability will assist HRD scholar-practitioners in solving issues and developing interventions related to specific tasks. LC commented on the importance of role confidence:

You have to know how to do your job. You've got to know some of the research in your field, you've got to know the practices of whatever you do. If you're a designer, you have to know how to design. If you're a facilitator, you have to know how to facilitate. If you're a manager, you have to know how to consult.

LC reinforced those remarks with the following conclusion,

You can't [wait to] learn that [knowledge] when you need it. You're going to need that as part of your background and bring it to bear. There's not much that you can go out and actually study up [on] and then come and make a recommendation. You can refresh yourself or look for the more complex

models, kind of like what I just talked about with cognitive apprenticeship, but you have to have that general knowledge first, and I don't think we all have that by any stretch of the imagination.

Technical skills and knowledge is so diverse, in fact, that it is important to focus on technical language and components when discussing it. For example, SD said he understands the concept of staffing and compensation, EEO, diversity and labor relations, and employee relations, all of which he considers technical knowledge within the human resource management realm. He said, "In order to effectively execute HR you have to know all of those functional areas and those skillsets and have it in your toolkit to be effective at the role." In particular, technical knowledge of employment law and employee relations is relevant to his HRD role.

**Collaboration.** Eight of the 14 participants ranked collaboration as an important factor that influences their research-to-practice work. Another word used by the participants to describe this theme was *teamwork*. In this study's context, *collaboration* involves working within one's team as well as with other stakeholders to create alignment and to achieve a common purpose.

Collaboration enables individuals to work together to achieve a common purpose. However, it requires openness, knowledge sharing, and self-reflection. MB argued that an individual's self-importance or self-worth cannot fully contribute to business solutions. To illustrate her point, she elaborated:

Another competency is really a collaborative non-ego driven competency. I collaborate very closely with our HR department, and they're building a solution

that we'll be responsible for implementing. I make sure that I am working in lock step with the HR folks, and collaborating on a team, so they don't create solutions in a vacuum. So, for instance, succession management is something that we're working on, and it's being led by our HR department, because that's more their purview. But I'm in every meeting providing the operational perspective so that the solution created and then ultimately rolled out incorporates the business line/operational perspective so that it's actually practicable and useful for us at it gets rolled out. So, being collaborative [is important] so that solutions are practicable. [This] competency creates solutions [that] are really important so [that] you're not creating things in a vacuum.

As noted in the example above, when dealing with a high-performing group, it can be difficult to acknowledge self-importance and to keep egos or self-pride suppressed. On the other hand, a little ego can be healthy and perhaps even necessary to identify and solve tough problems. Self-confidence in oneself is essential when working with a group of highly qualified and educated professionals. For example, YP shared that she was fortunate to work with highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals who helped her in designing and integrating adult learning programs. At the time, she had not gone to graduate school yet, did not understand research to practice, and did not have a theoretical background, so she had to rely on experts on her team. YP mentioned, “Every HRD position I've had, it's been a part of organizations that have teams of HRD people that are highly qualified and educated.”

Sacrifices need to be made for the greater good of the group, and when an individual abandons the plan in pursuit of his or her own interest, problems tend to arise. NI reiterated the importance of collaboration by stating, “The teamwork that we have in an organization is very important to [developing] sustainable and successful projects.”

**Training skills.** Seven of the 14 participants indicated that training was a huge responsibility in their work. Interestingly, the seven participants discussed training as a challenging job. Therefore, they suggested focus on training qualities that enable trainers to be competent in their work.

For instance, BM recommended conducting a thorough needs analysis and performance evaluation before training takes place. In his example, he shared that his company does a lot of technology training on software. A new software program was being rolled out, and there was a comparison made between Vendor A and Vendor B. Business leaders had a perception that one vendor was better than the other, but there was also a perspective from business leaders that they had to begin and start from the ground up and teach people everything. He could have gone down the path of saying that training was needed, but instead, he thought (sarcastically):

Yes, the business leaders are right. Let me build everything from the ground up, and it will keep myself and the team very busy building training for this new software program without really taking into consideration any of the needs of the end user or the learner.

Fortunately, his team conducted a needs analysis utilizing a focus group, and they were able to determine that in more than 90 percent of the scenarios that the team gave the



participants, the participants were able to figure out the process with little to no training. Based on his analysis, he was also able to decipher and honor the fact that adults came to work with prior knowledge and no training of basic knowledge was needed. BM revealed:

So we did just that and so we were able to save the company tens of thousands of dollars and a lot of time and effort creating and over-building training when it wasn't really needed, so it comes down to really conducting a thorough needs analysis and performance and observation of the people. Working that process through, we carefully thought through the protocol, and we really wanted to establish somewhat of a sterile environment to do this and use some really good questioning and probing questions to get what was in everyone's head.

BM provided a prime example of needs analysis to enhance training quality. Although, training was not involved, the needs analysis helped him determine that training was not needed. Similarly, NI agreed that training qualities can aid in transferring knowledge. Trainers can clearly communicate learning goals, use real-world examples, and provide post-training support to ensure that learning is transferred into the workplace. Clearly, training skills are needed to determine if training is necessary as well as to effectively facilitate learning transfer. FD said that having good training skills is important because one may unexpectedly be asked to develop and implement training programs, even when it is not a part of one's job description. He explained:

Right now, I'm working on a series with our training department of supervisory training—so looking at providers, seeing what we can do when it directs to

online, online training for supervisor compliance training. So it seems like everywhere I go I always get put on the HRD training projects while maintaining my current—my more typical role as an HRM professional.

These examples illustrate that training is inevitable in HRD scholar-practitioners' work. Therefore, knowing how to conduct a needs analysis, design training materials, implement training using appropriate instructional methods, and evaluate effectiveness of training all require training skills. Interestingly, training skills was considered by some participants as interchangeable with facilitation skill, which I will discuss later.

**Problem-solving skill.** Five of the 14 participants recognized research skill as important in their work. In this study's context, *problem-solving skill* is defined as a process that uses logic to make sense of the problem and come up with an intelligent solution. Problem-solving skill is often associated with other skills such as analytical thinking and creative thinking. In this sense, skill in problem solving is the process of using analytical or creative thinking to identify and solve problems by understanding the situation, evaluating alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate course of action.

MB considers herself to be a problem solver. She said, "I definitely consider myself a problem solver. When people ask me what I do for a living, [I say] it basically [involves] solv[ing] problems and set[ting] people up for success." She shared an example of a problem-solving experience in her recent work in which she was responsible for changing a business model. Her job, specifically, was to make sure that the behaviors of people changed and that communication was accomplished effectively. She was responsible for making sure that the business model change was successfully

implemented and did not negatively impact the bottom line. She also mentioned that she was brought in a year after the fact, so she had to quickly learn the organization, identify the issues, and come up with solutions. She recalled:

I was already behind the initiative, and I had to create an organizing framework over [and] around all the different moving parts of what I needed to do around educating employees and communicating to employees and altering behavior in all those different pieces.

Similarly, BM said that problem solving is a day-to-day activity he has to engage in at work. BM also brought up an interesting point about problem solving, that is the problems in large, for-profit organizations can be different from those in small, non-profit organizations.

I could speak from a large company perspective and I consulted with very, very small organizations and non-profit organizations, and I say this a lot—the non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations, at the end of the day they're organizations. They have similar problems. But, you have to have some experience navigating a very large company structure, multiple layers, and so forth, and to see how intricate an organization is, and then you're able to find where you can make an impact.

According to both MB and BM, problem solving is an integral part of HRD scholar-practitioners' daily work, which is why employers are so keen on this skill. Dealing with changes and improvements in the workplace can help strengthen the ability to think analytically and creatively. The key here is being engaged and exposed to

problem-solving experiences that involve identifying the problem, understanding the environment, coming up with a solution, and implementing a course of action.

**Systems thinking.** Five of the 14 participants recognized systems thinking as important in their work. In this study's context, *systems thinking* is understanding how things fit together by examining the relationships and interactions among different elements within a system.

Participants shared diverse viewpoints and examples of systems thinking. For instance, MB associated systems thinking with problem solving. From her perspective, systems thinking helps her explore a problem as part of a larger system. When asked to help implement a new business model, MB argued that while problem solving was important, systems thinking was even more so.

I'm taking a whole bunch of different disparate pieces of information and creating a visual representation and a strategic plan to incorporate all of these pieces of information and create a path forward. While problem solving is a piece of that, I think it's actually bigger. It's more of really being able to take all of those disparate parts and put them [together like pieces of a puzzle], to create the cohesive and comprehensive plan.

GT is also a proponent of systems thinking. However, rather than viewing systems thinking as relating to problem solving, GT sees it as an underlying philosophy:

So it's not just understand[ing] a piece of the business but try[ing] to understand how the inner workings of the business fit with the bigger picture. I'm a big proponent of systems thinking.

In this sense, GT argued that by understanding the system and its changing structures, HRD scholar-practitioners can expand the choices available and create champion interventions to help develop organizations. Whether or not systems thinking is used as a tool for solving problems, it is still an underlying philosophy that creates an awareness of structure and power influences in the organizations.

**Strategic planning and thinking.** This theme addresses the participants' thoughts concerning the importance of strategic planning. Four of the 14 participants stressed the importance of strategic planning and/or thinking. In this study's context, *strategic planning* is a systematic way of planning for future changes and success. Effective strategic planning is based on strategic thinking that involves a course of decision about how to effectively and efficiently accomplish goals by exploring all possible opportunities and challenges. *Strategic thinking* captures the essence of the strategic planning process because it involves examining everything that impacts individual roles, understanding stakeholder needs, and ensuring that all of this is aligned with the strategic plan

Being able to link long-range visions, concepts, and resources to daily work can be challenging. However, participants noted that it is important to their success because it provides them and the organization a sense of direction. Specifically, the purpose of strategic planning is to connect the organization's mission and vision with a plan that yields favorable results. HD discussed the importance of strategic planning ability in her work, "Managing what we call vision and mission [is important] and driving for results

because if I cannot show that primarily [in my work], then the business will have no regard or respect for my abilities.”

HD mentioned that HRD scholar-practitioners should be competent in creating, implementing, and demonstrating winning strategies. Therefore, strategic planning requires proper strategic thinking ability. Strategic planning tends to answer the question, “How and when do we achieve our business goals?” Strategic thinking ensures that all business and individual factors aligned with the strategic plan. When discussing the implementation of strategic thinking, FA advised, “See what's there how it could be applicable to what you're doing. [It may be] something that has no relation to your industry, no relation to your thing. But you see there is something of value for your business.” FA suggested that strategic thinking helps provide stakeholders with a better understanding of the external and internal factors that influence decision. MB made a similar point when describing how she used strategic thinking to assist her clients. For MB, the process was about “imagining the potential and envisioning the endgame or the end product and being able to help my client see what’s possible down the road and guiding him or her toward the right solution to invest in.”

As previously mentioned, strategic planning cannot happen without strategic thinking, and the thinking enhances the planning. Strategic planning provides a roadmap that indicates the direction the organization is going and the actions needed to get there. HRD scholar-practitioners can use their strategic ability to make decision making and change easier for stakeholders by providing insights to current and future states. As FA

mentioned, strategic thinkers should be found among effective HRD scholar-practitioners.

**Facilitation skill.** Four of the 14 participants described facilitation skill as being critical to their work. In this study's context, *facilitation skill* involves a facilitator guiding and managing a group to ensure group participation is promoted and objectives are achieved effectively. Trainers might use a facilitative style in a training session wherein they act as more of a guide encouraging thinking and discussion. On the other hand, facilitation skill may be viewed as a stand-alone competency and used in discussions or presentations.

Participants shared diverse viewpoints and examples of facilitation skill. For instance, YP associated facilitation with training. In her example, she was teaching in an engineer training program. She identified the training as a culture change initiative for adult learners. She specifically recalled an engineer who was having a very difficult time with the subject. They were talking about behaviors, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. The engineer was pacing the room, which was making everybody else in a packed room of 60 people uncomfortable. She knew she had to quickly change the learning environment to make it friendlier and more engaging. YP noted:

He was pacing around in the group. It was really making everyone very nervous. I thought, "I've got to redirect him, or this is going to explode." I started redirecting him using what I knew about theory and adult learning, and trying to apply some models, trying to get him more engaged.

Eventually, she got him to settle down. She was able to do so with a lot of mental effort and facilitation that engaged participants in small group discussions. On the other hand, SD used facilitation outside of a training situation:

[One] needs to be able to influence and that, I think is facilitation. So how do you take that scholarship and facilitate implementation or transition and how do you apply it and make it work?

SD suggested that HRD scholar-practitioners act as a facilitator to present information and provide guidance and structure so that the mission of the organization is accomplished. As illustrated in these examples, good facilitation focuses on shaping and guiding the learning and working process. The facilitator, in this case, works as a guide to help learners or managers move through a process together. The purpose is to get participants to feel empowered about their own input and participation and to get them to take on responsibility that will aid in developing and achieving goals.

**Cultural sensitivity.** Two of the 14 participants acknowledged multicultural awareness as influencing their work. Although only a small number of the participants discussed this theme, HD and YP made strong cases for cultural sensitivity as an important factor influencing how individuals learn, interact, and communicate with others of diverse background. Other phrases used by the participants to describe this theme included *diversity knowledge* and *multicultural knowledge*. In this study's context, *cultural sensitivity* involves having a strong awareness of one's own value while adapting to other cultures, demonstrating non-judgmental respect for others, and appreciating individual commonalities and differences.



YP is a big proponent of cultural diversity because it is a huge part of her work and research. She was asked to teach some critical thinking classes for the women that were brought from Afghanistan and Rwanda to the United States. One of the things that she has been able to do with her course was to reach out and offer to educate other people who might be interested in learning about other culture. YP said:

So, that's one of the things that I've been able to do with my course I'm able to reach out and offer that to other people that might be interested in learning about multiculturalism, and multicultural experiences' impact on the ability to critically think—there were some experiences in the activities between the women from Afghanistan, Rwanda, and the United States where there seemed to be—it seemed to be less of a challenge for the women from Rwanda and Afghanistan to use their critical thinking skills.

YP further discussed her reasoning for continuing work and research in multiculturalism. She noted that multicultural awareness is just as critical as ever because it can help to dilute cultural ignorance in discussions and worldviews.

I've always been interested in critical thinking anyway, and then, more so, interested in multiculturalism, and critical multicultural experiences because of things that are happening around us in our own society and in our own world, the discussions that are online, and the things that we hear people saying on TV. In this political pundit environment, there seem to be some definite differences in what people think about critical multiculturalism and their ability to critically

think. I think it's very interesting, and I think there's possibly some connections, and that's why I've continued that research.

HD made a similar statement, noting that cultural and racial ignorance is still an issue today, as is often demonstrated in the news. She stated, “Diversity and culture sensitivity are necessary, and what you hear in today’s news reminds us just as much that it is an important quality to have.” She recommended that HRD scholar-practitioners learn and gain a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity and individual differences because multiculturalism is helpful to enhance workplace development.

### **Organizational Competencies**

At the organizational level, effective HRD scholar-practitioners assess, develop, and orchestrate a strong organization by helping define and build its organizational capabilities. This category relates to how HRD scholar-practitioners described their roles and attitudes toward helping organizations’ success by managing, leading, and facilitating meaning, vision, and actions at work. As with job competencies, organizational competencies are generally learned and practiced on the job. Five themes emerged in this category: (a) business acumen, (b) consultation skill, (c) leadership skill, (d) management skill, and (e) customer focus. Table 8 provides an overview of the organizational competencies.

Table 8

*Organizational Competency Themes*

Category	Themes	Representative Quotes
Organizational Competencies	Business Acumen	<p>“I’ve been able to walk in the shoes of both sides. So when you have that, you have that perspective of what if and what’s possible. And I think that’s very, very important.” (HD)</p> <p>“The ones that get a seat at the table of leadership are the ones that are— have really good business acumen; they understand the operational components of the business; and understand that it’s their role to help that business succeed.” (MB)</p> <p>“I think one of the important things of HR is to understand the business. If you don’t understand the business you cannot be really supportive of the business, and don’t bring HR techniques or tools that are valuable for the business as a whole. You [need to] understand very much your industry, your business.” (FA)</p> <p>“So, your general business acumen, your understanding of strategy, your ability to know the politics of an organization and to influence, those skills are important” (CL)</p>
	Customer Focus	<p>“Everything we do has an eye towards the business.” (HD)</p> <p>“[The scholar-practitioner], in fact, has the client group’s best interest at heart.” (LC)</p>
	Management skills	<p>“I think that it is important for a manager to plan, organize, and control. I mean the traditional definition of what is a manager: somebody that plans; somebody that organizes; somebody not necessarily the traditional control or people that control of the systems.” (KC)</p> <p>“I manage the lecturers, and then I create some policies for the teaching standard that we have.” (NI)</p>
	Leadership skill	<p>“I got constant immediate feedback on my leadership ability for my first 10 years out of college. So, that helped me learn how to be a really good boss, and what people did and didn’t want.” (MB)</p> <p>“I also think that there needs to be leadership. You know? And, and as far as leadership, I think, leadership skills require relationship building and the integration of what the person knows and what their colleagues also know. The collaboration and the sharing of knowledge.” (KC)</p> <p>“A consultative mindset is needed.” (BM)</p>

**Business acumen.** All participants discussed business acumen as the most significant competency for HRD scholar-practitioners to possess in order to effectively integrate research and practice. In this study’s context, *business acumen* refers to a keen

understanding of the business as well as external and internal factors that influence business success.

Participants argued that HRD scholar-practitioners need a high level of business acumen to do their jobs. Every day they make decisions, many of which involve financial resources of the company that impact business results. No HRD scholar-practitioner deliberately sets out to make bad decisions that result in financial losses. However, without understanding how their actions and decisions impact an organization's bottom line, they might not be in a position to seek alternatives. For this reason, FA suggested knowing the industry and the company:

I think one of the important things of HR is to understand the business. If you don't understand the business, you cannot be really supportive of the business and don't bring HR techniques or tools that are valuable for the business as a whole. You [need to] understand very much your industry, your business.

In addition, CL and MB noted that business acumen will foster awareness of the organizational politics, which in turn helps with recognizing political power and strategic relationships that influence the decision-making process. CL commented, "So your general business acumen, your understanding of strategy, your ability to know the politics of an organization and to influence that [are important] skills to have."

Business acumen is a critical competency for HRD scholar-practitioners. According to MB and HD, it has become even more important for those in the management and leadership roles. For instance, MB said:

The ones that get a seat at the table of leadership are the ones that have really good business acumen; they understand the operational components of the business, and understand that it's their role to help that business succeed.

HD is also in a management and leadership position. She noted that business acumen was more prominent in higher-level positions. Having been immersed in retail for many years, HD understands how the business works and what is being asked of her through people and through product. She stated, "I've been able to walk in the shoes of both sides. So when you have that, you have that perspective of what if and what's possible. And I think that's very, very important."

Business acumen is the understanding of business and the influences that impact results. It means understanding strategies, the numbers on financial statements, and the politics and environmental influences that impact those numbers. HRD scholar-practitioners, especially those in management and leadership positions, have a responsibility to educate themselves and others on the goals and the financial outcomes of the business. In other words, they need to understand the big picture of the organization in order to take necessary and appropriate actions to align with business objectives.

**Customer focus skill.** All 14 participants stressed the importance of this skill. In this study, *customer focus skill* is defined as meeting the needs of stakeholders.

According to my participants, customer focus requires understanding stakeholders' needs and a series of activities designed to deliver stakeholder satisfaction. The process of achieving stakeholder satisfaction is based on understanding what

stakeholders want and need. Some examples of stakeholders identified in this study include employees, clients, government agencies, and the owners from which an organization draws its resources. Stakeholders influence business activities because they carry weight on the decisions and actions made by organizations and its workers to achieve business results. HD noted that HRD scholar-practitioners who adhere to stakeholders' needs have made business success a focus of their work. She stressed that "everything we do has an eye towards the business."

Stakeholders have taken over as a central influence for many organizations because they recognize that satisfied stakeholders are a key to building a long-term relationship and sustainable profit over time. For this reason, LC highlighted that having "the client group best interest at heart" is important for HRD scholar-practitioners to comprehend.

**Management skills.** Eight of the 14 participants stressed that management skill was important in their work. The conceptual understanding and definition of management skill and its characteristics vary among individuals and across fields. In this study, *management skill* involves decision-making, planning, and monitoring of projects, time, and people.

Participants argued that it is important to develop effective management skills such as time management, project management, and delegation. For instance, meetings and projects need to be structured so that effective decisions will be made and goals will be accomplished. Effective management skills help formulate and carry out plans that

will keep the business going to stakeholder's satisfaction. KC provided her perspective on management skills:

I think that it is important for a manager to plan, organize, and control. I mean the traditional definition of what is a manager: somebody that plans; somebody that organizes; somebody not necessarily the traditional control or people that control of the systems, but someone who establishes formal structures for the boundaries within the decision-making process.

KC's definition of management skills is also shared by NI, "I manage the lecturers, and then I create some policies for the teaching standard that we have." Specifically, NI was promoted to department head and is now responsible for management duties where she manages the daily operation of the department such as administrative and finance issues and students and public relationship.

Project management is also an important managerial competency identified by the participants. CR mentioned that her work evolved from managing the HR benchmarks to managing projects. Therefore, project management is a necessary skill for her to oversee projects from beginning to completion. In this regard, she said, "It could be through managing projects like advisory or consulting projects, [or] process improvement projects."

**Leadership ability.** Seven of the 14 recognized leadership ability as important in their work. The conceptual understanding and definition of leadership ability and its characteristics vary among individuals and across fields. In this research context, *leadership ability* involves influencing others to accomplish goals and directing the

organization in ways that makes it more unified and coherent. In particular, participants discussed consulting, embracing and championing change, communicating, and building relationships as competencies of leadership ability.

Leadership ability is an organizational competency because HRD scholar-practitioners who are leaders in their organization act as a catalyst for change; they are in tune with their subordinates' needs and keep up with current issues in order to maximize their effectiveness. Moreover, leaders train their subordinates to perform their tasks effectively. They inspire employees to get motivated and excited about achieving goals, push them to excel, and guide them along the way. MB shared how feedback from employees and top management on her leadership ability contributed to her success in interacting with people and to being a good boss. She recalled, "I got constant immediate feedback on my leadership ability for my first 10 years, and out of college. So that helped me learn how to be a really good boss, and [learn] what people did and didn't want."

Furthermore, KC suggested that relationship building and knowledge sharing are leadership characteristics that HRD scholar-practitioners should possess:

I think leadership skills require relationship building and the integration of what the person knows and what their colleagues also know. [It's] the collaboration and the sharing of knowledge.

According the study participants, a consultative mindset is also a leadership characteristic. For instance, BM suggested that "a consultative mindset is needed" to help people solve problems. Specifically, it is needed when a person is indecisive about



a decision, does not have enough information to make a judgment, or does not know of any alternatives. In summary, good leadership is a result of carefully applying good communication, creating an encouraging environment, and using a consultative mindset.

### **Evidence-Based Practice Strategies**

This category relates to how HRD scholar-practitioners described strategies used to implement evidence-based practice. Four themes emerged from this category: (a) formal education, (b) on-the-job learning, (c) professional development, and (d) networking.

#### **Formal Education**

Participants discussed how graduate courses taught them to understand and utilize research methodologies and findings. For example, NI said that graduate courses equipped her with the knowledge to “translate evidence into practice.” Similarly, FD shared a specific example in which his HRD PhD courses helped him understand and employ career development theories in his work: “I would say every company that I’ve been at, my role is to be the intermediary and to use my theories and what we learned through my master’s and PhD programs to help companies utilize those theories to create a good adult learning program.” Courses have also equipped him with the research knowledge he needs to effectively carry out his role as a scholar working as an assistant professor. Thus, graduate course preparation provided NI and FD with a fuller understanding of the field in order to engage in higher-level practice and leadership in a variety of settings and commit to lifelong learning.

## **On-the-Job Learning**

Participants shared their evidence-based practice experiences in the workplace and discussed how on-the-job learning has provided them with a real-world context to engage in research-practice integration. Unlike formal education, on-the-job learning provided participants with the workplace tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for them to effectively perform their jobs. KH said she was fortunate to work in an environment that values evidence-based practice. Her work also provided her with context to experience evidence-based practice with new assignments. She discussed how she applied some of the research and the theory that she implemented as a scholar in real-world practice:

I was trying to develop an affirmative action plan, which I've never done before, and I didn't have the prior year's plan to kind of use as a guide because it was the very first one that we were developing. I was also managing some severe pushback from our faculty in terms of new recruitment and selection procedures. I felt it was a win, a success in the end, because I was able to kind of change her perspective through dialogue.

Furthermore, DH provided an example of her participation in a job rotation program that gave her the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills.

I was fortunate enough to be at a rotational program, and that rotation brought me to . . . company headquarters, where I was placed in a job that was completely foreign to me called recruiting within the HR department. And I was asked to lead the college relations program, which at the time was hiring about 1000

interns a year and 2000 trainees a year. So, recruiting across many, many campuses in the U.S. So, that was a major experience from an HR perspective for me—from understanding branding, motivation, interviewing, and employment law—how all of those things came together.

Participants argued that the majority of their learning and practice takes place within the daily work environment. That being said, on-the-job learning is an approach that helped them acquire organizational information that could ultimately impact their evidence-based practice.

### **Professional Development**

Participants discussed how their participation in workshops and conferences has helped them gain skills, perspectives, and networks. Professional development was defined by participants as advanced professional learning intended to improve competencies and networks. For example, participants discussed how their participation in conferences helped them stay up-to-date on current issues in both academia and the corporate world. KH suggested that “honing in on that openness to learn and engaging in professional development . . . opens your mind more.” Earning certification from workshops was also seen as an advantage of professional development.

### **Networking**

Participants suggested that collaboration and networks of support are important catalysts for implementing evidence-based practice. Networking is about connecting with people; it is both a competency and a strategy that most participants believe enhances their evidence-based practice. Networking serves as a source of advice and

information for participants. For example, KH mentioned that collaborating with her colleagues has provided her with opportunities to engage in high-quality research that is used in her day-to-day practice. She said that translating new knowledge gained by research into practice is crucial but can be difficult to implement; however, she can turn to networks for guidance and support. BM echoed this sentiment by noting the practicality of his networks: “You have names of individuals and you have names of experts that you can reach out to, and I’ve used that on so many occasions, whether it is authors or consulting firms or publishers.”

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the lived experiences of 14 HRD scholar-practitioners with varying levels of experiences in integrating research and practice. Each of these professionals discussed successful and challenging experiences in which research was utilized in practice. The participants also discussed knowledge, skills, and abilities they possessed that enabled them to bring research into practice. They understand their roles in bridging the research and practice gap; thus, the importance of recognizing the competencies they inhabit to successfully carry out those roles were discussed. They know research and theory and influence others to do the same. They learn and disseminate knowledge that is relevant to individual and organizational practice. They meet organization and stakeholder needs by aligning mission, vision, and resources. They are subject matter experts who practice high-level thinking. Overall, they strive to improve their personal, academic, job, and organization competencies through continuous learning. The participants’ experiences indicated that these characteristics

are what separate HRD scholar-practitioners from pure scholars and pure practitioners. Participants in this study also offered input on important competencies that current and future HRD scholar-practitioners should develop to be successful in their work.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative study was to explore HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and experiences of research-practice integration. The first section of this chapter summarizes the findings presented in Chapter IV. Next, this chapter presents a conceptual framework that explains HRD scholar-practitioners' core competencies, followed by implications for research and practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

#### **Study Summary**

Using contingency theory as a guiding framework, the study explored HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and experiences of research-practice integration using a basic interpretative qualitative approach. The study focused on answering the following questions related to HRD scholar-practitioners' competencies:

1. What competencies do HRD scholar-practitioners consider essential to integrating research and practice?
2. What experiences do HRD scholar-practitioners have in integrating research and practice?
3. What strategies do HRD scholar-practitioners use in integrating research and practice?

Fourteen HRD scholar-practitioners participated in this study, all of whom met the following criteria: (a) they must integrate research and practice, (b) they must have at

least five years of work experience, and (c) they must hold at least a master's degree. Among them were 10 females. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes during the first round and 30 minutes during the second round. As shown in Figure 3, participants identified themselves more as a scholar or a practitioner, making them more competent on one side than the other. Specifically, Figure 3 illustrates key summary findings discussed in Chapter IV. Ten of the 14 participants who identified themselves as practitioners hold executive and consulting positions in their companies. These practitioners noted that practical skills, such as business acumen and experience, were more important than theoretical skills in effectively managing projects and change. Therefore, they suggested that practical skills and experiences should be emphasized for HRD scholars who are working toward achieving the HRD scholar-practitioner role.

On the other hand, four of the 14 participants identified more as scholars on the HRD scholar-practitioner spectrum, and they noted that research skills, including the ability to disseminate research and the knowledge of theories and topics in the field, were important competencies to possess as an HRD scholar-practitioner. These four participants also noted that research is a part of their job description and is essential in their daily work. Finally, all 14 participants discussed the need to have broad-based professional competencies such as ethics and integrity, interpersonal skills, and continuous learning.

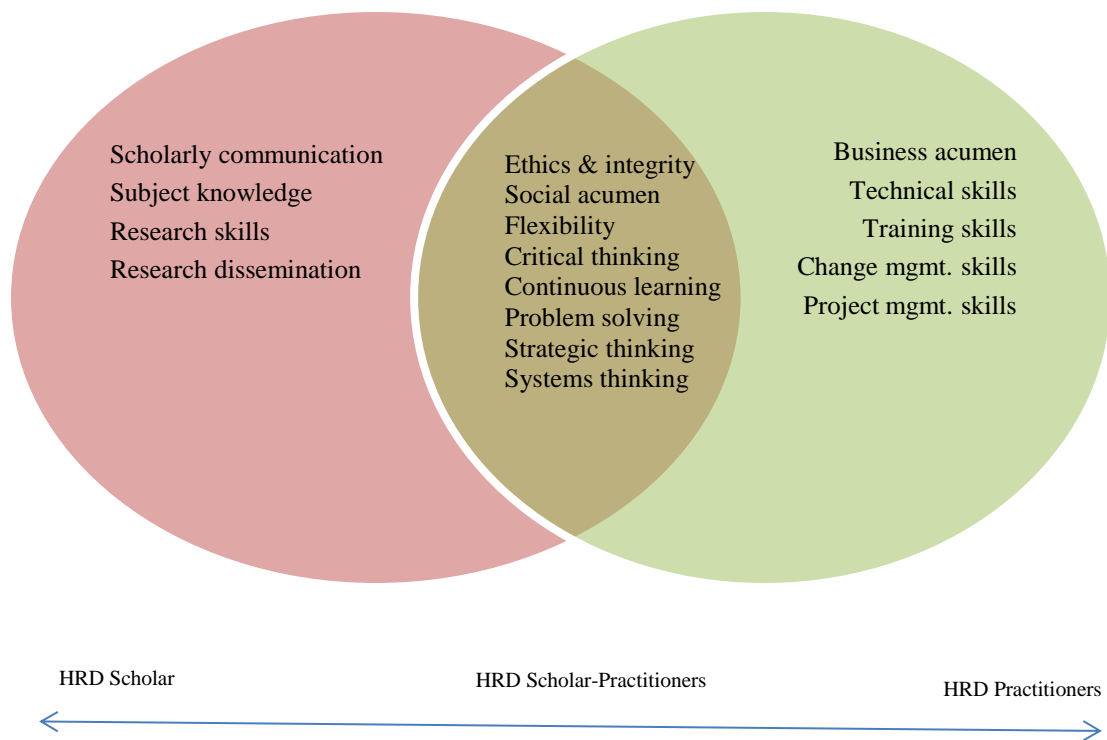


Figure 3. HRD Scholar-practitioner competency spectrum.

Findings from this study are largely consistent with previous research as discussed in Chapter II. From an HRD scholar-practitioner perspective, many issues were raised by participants that were specifically related to the concepts of competency development. In this section, I discuss findings as lessons learned guiding this study.

### **Lessons Learned from Question #1**

When asked about essential competencies to integrating research and practice, participants discussed continuous learning as an important competency in achieving their career success. While education and training are important to competency development, learning by doing can help individuals develop a range of competencies. Participants shared their journey of continuous learning, particularly their on-the-job and leadership



experiences that had helped them build the competencies needed to carry out their work as HRD scholar-practitioners. Managing change, leading a project team, serving as a mentor, consulting with clients, presenting at conferences, and taking on leadership roles were some developmental experiences that participants found helpful in cultivating the foundational and core skills they utilize today. These competencies are discussed below.

**Competencies in scholarship.** Because evidence-based practice is a huge part of HRD scholar-practitioners' work, five skill themes (scholarly communication, subject knowledge, research skill, research dissemination, and critical thinking skill) were identified among the participants. Specifically, participants who identified more as a scholar on the HRD scholar-practitioner spectrum noted that subject, theory, as well as research knowledge and capabilities were important in HRD scholar-practitioner work.

**Competencies in practice.** The common challenges that face HRD scholar-practitioners include problems with hierarchical and organizational structure, excessive rules and regulations, lack of resources, and general management. Recurring themes with respect to how these could be addressed included acknowledging the internal and external forces influencing business decisions. In this regard, participants argued that HRD scholar-practitioners need a high level of business acumen to do their jobs. Participants who identified more as practitioners on the HRD scholar-practitioner spectrum noted that practical competencies such as training, facilitation, consultation, project management, and change management skills were more important than theoretical knowledge in effectively managing projects and change. Practical

competencies address the job and organizational capabilities that include leadership, management, and functional expertise.

**Broad-based professional competencies.** One intention of the study was to explore critical experiences that participants find important in contributing to their scholar-practitioner competencies. Four key competency themes (continuous learning, ethics and integrity, working with others, and cognitive ability) were identified by participants as essential competencies of HRD scholar-practitioners. Competencies included in this domain represent the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that participants deem necessary regardless of their work.

Participants shared unique experiences that helped them progress toward their career development goals. Their desire to engage in developmental experiences is important in providing them with the opportunity to develop their career knowledge, skills, and abilities. They embarked on a career journey that led to self-discovery. For instance, they found their purpose in life, they dug deep and revealed the experiences that shaped them, and they understood their beliefs and are now living by them. The journey, however, can be a bumpy road. The journey includes challenges, misunderstanding, and doubts. They know for sure that the journey is worth taking, and they use continuous learning to grow from past challenges and to prepare for future ones.

### **Lessons Learned from Question #2**

When asked about the experiences that participants have in integrating research and practice, they mentioned that their experiences can be both rewarding and challenging. Participants confirmed that outcomes such as performance improvement,

change initiatives, and profit improve when HRD scholar-practitioners and organizational stakeholders engage in evidence-based practice. Described as a problem-solving approach that incorporates the conscientious use of theories and best practices from well-designed studies, evidence-based practice, according to the participants, saves time, increases productivity, and reduces cost. For example, some participants saw formal education as cultivating critical thinking. Formal education, in this case, encouraged them to seek answers regarding how performance can be improved and how changes can be made through the emphasis on research-practice integration. Other participants provided examples of training and policy changes as a result of research-practice integration, including shifts in practice guidelines and procedure standards. The findings of this study show that competencies and strategies can enable HRD scholar-practitioners to successfully adopt evidence-based practice.

In addition to sharing successful evidence-based practice experience, participants also discussed challenging experiences in integrating research and practice. Barriers to widespread use of current research findings in organizations remain, such as the knowledge level of employees, the support of stakeholders, and the inevitable changes of organizations. However, the importance of integrating research and practice was substantiated. Participants acknowledged that the most important factor influencing evidence-based practice is support from their organizational stakeholders to use and conduct research.

### **Lessons Learned from Question #3**

When asked about what strategies they use to remove the barriers to evidence-based practice and to develop the competencies to successfully integrate research and practice, they discussed four essential strategies that elevated their awareness of the research and practice integration. Networking, on-the-job training, formal education, and professional development have shown promise in regard to shifting attitudes and behaviors toward research-practice integration.

**Formal education.** Graduate courses have helped shaped participants' work in shifting from a traditional practice approach to an evidence-based approach. Participants discussed how courses taught them to understand and utilize research methods and methodologies. In addition, their graduate courses have helped them develop critical thinking skills.

**On-the-job learning.** Participants shared their knowledge and skills gained through decades of work experience. Unlike formal education, on-the-job learning provided participants with the workplace tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for them to learn to effectively perform their jobs. Furthermore, on-the-job learning provided participants with a real-world context to integrate theories and research into their work. While on-the-job learning was often used to teach and gain workplace competencies, it also instilled aspects of workplace culture and performance expectations in participants. For example, some of the participants discussed how this approach helped them acquire organizational information that could ultimately impact their evidence-based practice.

**Professional development.** Participants discussed professional development experience through conference participation. Professional development was defined by participants as advanced professional learning intended to improve competencies and networks. For example, participants discussed how their participation in conferences had helped them stay-to-date on current issues in both the academia and the corporate. They were able to gain a better understanding of what is working or not working in organizations and then use the findings to improve work qualities and results. Earning certification in a particular conference or program was also seen as an advantage of professional development.

**Networking.** Networking is about connecting with people; it is both a competency and a strategy that most participants believe enhances their evidence-based practice. Networking serves as a source of advice and information for participants. For example, some of the participants mentioned that working with their colleagues or networks can help develop competencies collaboratively or create new interventions or programs that are implemented by teams.

In this section, I present four conclusions derived from the lessons learned. They are:

1. Continuous learning is key to the development of the foundational and core competencies.
2. Personal, academic, job, and organizational competencies are essential to evidence-based practice.

3. Technological, organizational, and sociocultural forces create a barrier to research-practice integration.
4. Formal education, on-the-job learning, professional development programs, and networking can develop the competencies necessary to successfully integrate research and practice.

### **Conclusion #1: Continuous Learning is Key to the Development of the Foundational and Core Competencies**

The first conclusion of this study shed light on participants' continuous learning journey. Individual perception of continuous learning did influence competency development. As presented in Chapter IV, participants reported decisions relating to developmental experiences and desires to enhance their career knowledge, skills, and abilities. They embarked on a career journey that led to self-discovery.

Ruona and Gilley (2009) argued that all HRD professionals should work toward becoming an HRD scholar-practitioner because this group meets all of the standards of being advanced HRD professionals. Ruona and Gilley offered detailed information through their definitions of four types of practitioners: atheoretical practitioners, practitioners, reflective practitioners, and scholar-practitioners. The classification of practitioners illustrates the significance of roles, responsibilities, and competencies in HRD professionals' work. Additionally, the model outlines the stages of professional developments that HRD practitioners can learn and master.

Evidence from this study reinforces that the participants fall into the last category of Ruona and Gilley's (2009) empirical model. In other words, the findings of this study

indicated that participants are on the higher end of the continuum because they are experts of the field who critically reflect on their practice and use high-quality research-practice integration approach. Participants shared that continuous learning helped them develop the competencies to become experts in evidence-based practice. Learning continuously from graduate courses, peers, and on-the-job have helped them become more competent in understanding theories, conducting research, and engaging in evidence-based practice. Therefore, continuous learning has helped them develop from a novice to an expert in research-practice integration.

Ruona and Gilley (2009) recommended that individuals in HRD use the conceptual model to plan for their professional development. Inherent in the model are competencies that must be practiced and mastered. My study provided additional evidence to support their conceptual framework. Specifically, my study provided examples of individual experiences engaging in personal development that influence their evidence-based practice. They shared what stimulated their development and how they engage in their development, all of which supports Ruona and Gilley's conceptual framework of novice-to-expert continuum. As a complement to this idea, Gilley (2006) noted that the more HRD practitioners convert to scholar-practitioner, the more the field can influence every practice and outcome with research.

## **Conclusion #2: Personal, Academic, Job, and Organizational Competencies are Essential to Evidence-Based Practice**

Participants revealed that personal, academic, job, and organizational competencies are essential in evidence-based practice. Twenty-two competencies were identified in the study. Kormanik et al. (2009) presented a preliminary competency model for HRD scholar-practitioners that captured these four categories of competencies. However, academic competencies were not fully captured in their model.

Kormanik et al.'s (2009) study participants were asked to sort out 67 competencies into three categories: (a) essential, (b) nice to have, and (c) not important. Based on the data collected, 16 essential HRD competencies were identified that formed Kormanik et al.'s HRD scholar-practitioner competency model. The model provided an extensive list of competencies, some of which have been identified in this study findings. For example, personal competencies such as continuous learning, social acumen, flexibility, and values and ethics were identified in both Kormanik et al.'s study and mine. Furthermore, job competencies and organizational competencies such as role confidence, problem-solving, systems thinking, strategic planning, training skill, business acumen, leadership skills, management skills, and customer focus were identified in Kormanik et al.'s study and mine.

Interestingly, my participants highlighted academic competencies such as scholarly communication, subject matter knowledge, research competency, and research dissemination as essential competencies, which were not captured in Kormanik et al.'s study. In fact, research competency was not included in their portfolio sort cards that



participants were asked to select. It is also important that more competencies were captured in their study that were not identified in mine. Competencies such as humor, work-life balance, and conflict management were included in their study. The different list of competencies is worth noting because it reinforces the importance of exploring in-depth experiences of participants. In other words, instead of getting participants to sort out a list of competencies, my study allowed participants to identify their own competencies based on their experiences.

### **Conclusion #3: Technological, Organizational, and Sociocultural Forces Create a Barrier to Research-Practice Integration**

This conclusion supports the framework of contingency theory, which takes into consideration individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics that influence effective performance. In this study, participants discussed the technological, organizational, and sociocultural forces that impact evidence-based practice. My findings can be explained by contingency theory. Contingency theory states that performance is believed to occur when the individuals' capabilities are aligned with the needs of the job and the environment in which the organization is embedded (Boyatzis, 2009; Ruckert et al., 1985). Boyatzis (2009) argued that changing environmental and organizational contexts have an important impact on the demonstration of competencies.

Participants discussed the barriers to use of current research evidence in organizations, including the knowledge level of employees, the support of stakeholders, and the inevitable changes of organizations. These findings support the contingency theory framework in that contingencies such as the individual, job demands, and the

organizational environment impact participants' evidence-based practice. Contingency theory is a theoretical approach that serves as the basis for an enhanced understanding of the relationship between competency and performance (Boyatzis, 2009). Therefore, a contingent perspective in this research provided a theoretical base for understanding participants' competencies and the influencing forces that impact positive outcomes such as evidence-based practice, innovative solutions, and positive change.

**Conclusion #4: Formal Education, On-the-Job Learning, Professional Development Programs, and Networking Can Develop the Competencies Necessary to Successfully Integrate Research and Practice**

This conclusion addresses the multifaceted strategies that participants considered necessary in ensuring effective and efficient evidence-based practice. From the interviews, I identified four primary ways to effectively integrate research and practice: formal education, on-the-job learning, professional development, and networking. Other effective mechanisms used to integrate research and practice, or to bridge the HRD scholar-practitioner gap, are also discussed by other countless researchers (Hughes & Gosney, 2016; Hughes & Wang, 2015; Hughes, Wang, Zheng, & McLean, 2010), reinforcing the importance of strategic influences in evidence-based practice.

Hughes et al. (2010) conducted a study using a multiple case study approach to explore implementation concern of HRD scholar-practitioners' evidence-based practice. In this study, a number of implementation strategies were identified by participants to drive evidence-based practice. Strong appreciation for research and environmental and organizational demands were two prominent strategies identified by participants. Other

recommendations offered by their participants included “(1) building communities through constant dialogues, (2) educating organizational members about the value of research, (3) being the proponents of practitioners, and (4) becoming more of an empathetic practitioner” (Hughes et al., 2010, p. 42). Interestingly, my findings were similar to Hughes et al.’s. My participants also discussed building communities of scholars and practitioners because these networks can provide input and perspectives that can enhance evidence-based practice. My participants also shared their strong appreciation for research, and discussed environmental and organizational demands as driving forces influencing evidence-based practice. One major difference between Hughes et al.’s study and mine is the combination of personal characteristics (e.g. attributes and competencies) and strategies that influence participants’ evidence-based practice.

Similarly, Hughes and Gosney (2016) suggested that considering the HRD field as a knowledge management system can provide a framework in closing the HRD scholar-practitioner gap. The purpose of knowledge management system is “to disseminate knowledge that inspires positive action in the organizations in which it is practiced” (p. 4). Other specific strategies to bridge and research-practice gap were discussed by Hughes and Wang (2015). They identified from a preliminary study a variety of strategies:

Provide a venue for dialogues and idea exchanges between the scholars and practitioners through joint conferences; research collaborations between the researchers and practitioners; invite guest speakers from the academia and

practitioner's world for educational purposes, hold special forum or joint seminars; use social media for disseminating research ideas; making research findings easier to understand by practitioners; equip practitioners with adequate research knowledge, propose new techniques that meeting the changing needs of the real world, and research best practices.

My findings provided further evidence to Hughes and Wang's study. My interviews with the 14 participants helped me identify formal education, on-the-job learning, professional development, and networking as four strategies enhancing evidence-based practice. For example, my participants discussed their participation in professional development (e.g. conferences) has supported their evidence-based practice.

Based on the findings, I provided a new conceptual framework that includes the characteristics and strategies that influence positive outcomes. Additionally, this study reinforces that HRD scholar-practitioners can have different characteristics than HRD scholars and practitioners, and mastering situation awareness, open-mindedness, risk-taking, and innovation can allow movement on either side of the spectrum. This new framework will be discussed in the next section.

### **A New Conceptual Framework**

Short and Shindell's (2009) influential study examined who HRD scholar-practitioners are and their role in closing the gap between research and practice. In addition, Short and Shindell (2009), Kormanik and Shindell (2009), and Ruona and Gilley (2009) argued that HRD scholar-practitioners have a central role in improving the HRD field. Therefore, there are concerns for recognizing the roles they inhabit, the

competencies needed to successfully carry out those responsibilities, and the strategies used to ensure positive outcomes.

To address this issue, I propose a conceptual framework (Figure 4) for HRD professionals to use as a self-assessment tool in their career advancement process. Specifically, the framework attempts to further address Short and Shindell (2009) and Kormanik and Shindell's (2009) concern of the roles and characteristics of HRD scholar-practitioners in influencing research and practice. As illustrated in Figure 4, HRD scholar-practitioners can achieve desired outcomes by acknowledging the relationships between individual characteristics, strategies, and evidence-based practice. A process model looking at inputs, processes, and outputs may be helpful in understanding the relationships, with the four personal attributes and the three categories of competencies as the inputs, work and learning strategies as the implementation process, and evidence-based practice, innovative solution, and efficiency as the output.

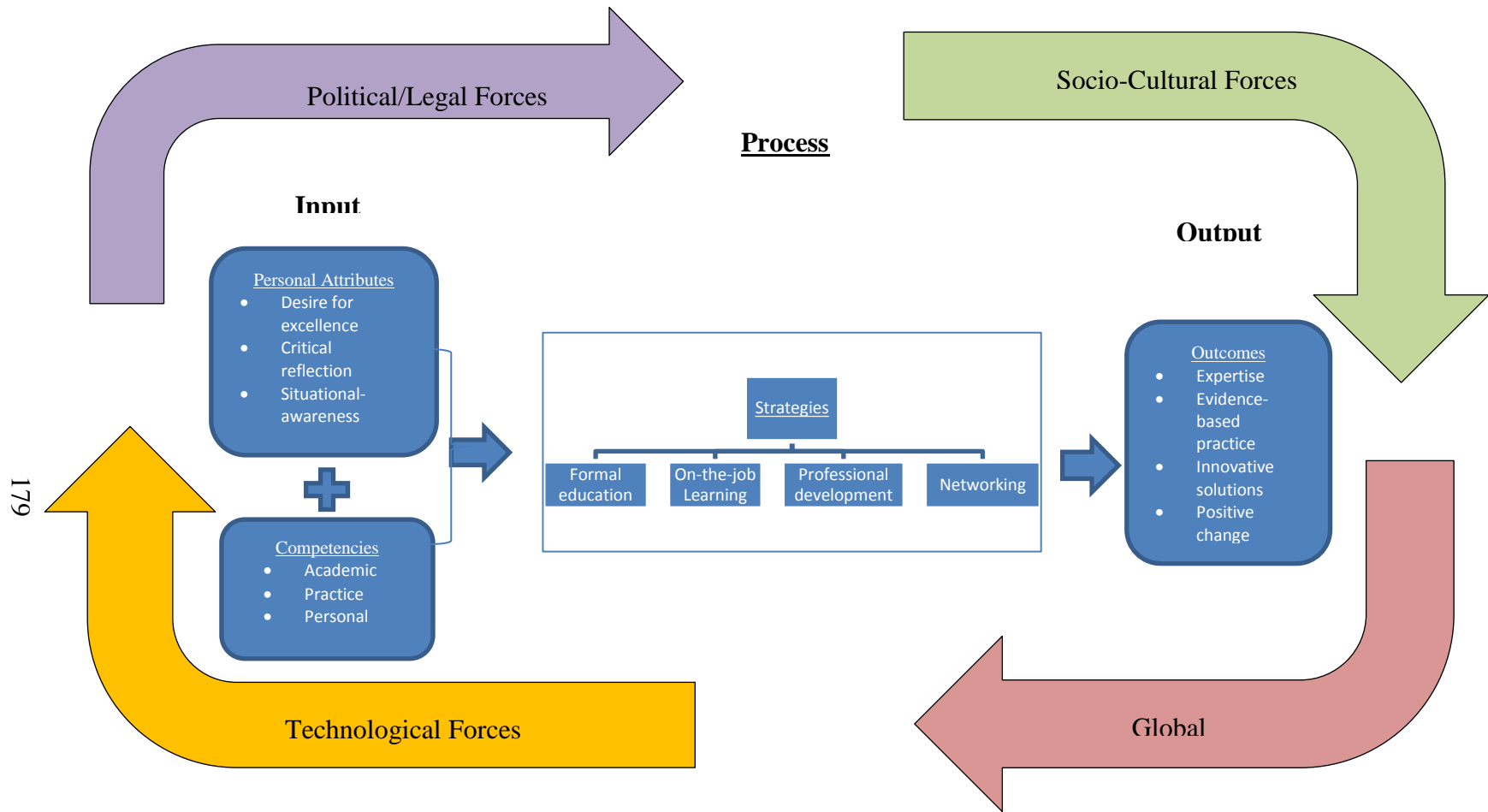


Figure 4. HRD scholar-practitioner development framework.

### **Input: Personal Attributes and Competencies**

According to the literature (e.g., Kormanik et al., 2009; Ruona & Gilley, 2009) and this study's findings, personal attributes and competencies contribute to evidence-based practice, innovative solution, and positive change. In Figure 4, the three key personal attributes and the three categories of competencies are displayed. The four competency categories discussed in Chapter IV have been reduced to three categories (e.g., academic, practice, and personal) for the purpose of highlighting the scholar and practice competencies relevant to HRD scholar-practitioners' work.

#### **Personal Attributes**

Personal attributes are personality traits. In this regard, an HRD scholar-practitioner who has the desire for excellence, is aware of his or her situation, and is reflective is likely to contribute to positive organizational outcomes. The reason why these attributes are crucial is because not all HRD professionals possess these qualities.

**Desire for excellence.** HRD scholar-practitioners have values that prompt them to go the extra mile. In other words, they foster continuous learning and enjoy meeting high standards that are within reach. Participants in this study noted that they sometimes experience temporary disappointment, but they use that distress to motivate themselves to keep going. In fact, they correct mistakes and learn from them.

**Critical reflection.** HRD scholar-practitioners must have the personal centering to know their own feelings, values, and goals as well as have the integrity to behave honestly and responsibly. Ruona and Gilley (2009) argued that reflection is one of the most important ingredients to HRD scholar-practitioners' work and self-development.

**Situational awareness.** Situational awareness (SA) involves the ability to remain aware of everything that is happening in one's environment (Green, Odom, & Yates, 1995). In this research context, SA requires HRD scholar-practitioners to quickly identify, interpret, and integrate information gathered from the environment in order to drive individual and organizational behaviors. HRD scholar-practitioners are more attuned to the work environment than HRD scholars or HRD practitioners because they understand the different factors that can contribute to successful research and practice.

### **Academic Competencies**

Research knowledge and skills are essential for understanding and conducting research. As discussed in Chapter IV, academic competencies are particularly relevant to HRD scholars, whose careers are increasingly dependent on research output. HRD scholar-practitioners need to have a solid understanding of what constitutes good research, know how to design and execute empirical studies using quantitative and qualitative research designs, and know how to present research findings and results in an effective and honest manner. All of these subject and research competencies can influence evidence-based practice, expertise, innovative solutions, and positive change.

**Scholarly communication.** All 14 participants argued that communication highlights the gap between scholars and practitioners. In this regard, the ability to communicate research findings in a digestible and usable language that practitioners can easily comprehend is an important competency to possess. Specifically, this competency can affect evidence-based practice outcome because HRD scholar-practitioners can help



ensure that scholarly information is conveyed so that it is easily received and understood by practitioners.

**Subject matter knowledge.** A good knowledge of subject and theory was identified as a significant competency. Many participants mentioned that HRD scholar-practitioners should be aware of economic, organizational, and political issues and have enough knowledge of subject matter to be able to provide effective input. This competency can influence the outcomes in Figure 4. For example, HRD scholar-practitioners who possess subject matter knowledge can influence innovative solutions because they have the intellectual faculties to create new resolutions and products that can save organizations time and money.

**Research skills.** This competency encompasses understanding and applying research methodologies to address research questions. A couple of participants felt that although in-depth understanding of all the stated processes and concepts is not mandatory, a workable knowledge of those elements is essential to interpreting research findings and results. Having this skill can have a major impact on evidence-based practice outcomes.

**Research dissemination.** Possessing the ability to disseminate research findings and results was also identified as an important competency among the participants. Importantly, sharing new knowledge with both the practitioners and the general public is a competency that can impact effective evidence-based practice.

## **Practice Competencies**

A large part of HRD scholar-practitioners' responsibility is the ability to apply the scholarly knowledge and skills learned to actual practice. In addition to addressing the scholarly side of an HRD scholar-practitioner, it is also critical to understand the practitioner side. The HRD practitioner is seen as a "learning agent, change agent, internal consultant, performance engineer, or HRD manager" (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005, p. 191). Job and organizational competencies discussed in Chapter IV are essential practice competencies. Similarly, research on the characteristics of successful HRD practitioners yields the following list of capabilities: knowledge of the business, performance improvement ability, quality improvement ability, and business communication. All of these skills can influence evidence-based practice, expertise, innovative solutions, and positive change outcomes.

**Technical skills.** Individuals with technical skills are often more confident in their jobs than those without them. Technical skills provide HRD scholar-practitioners with essential knowledge and capabilities that will enable them to operate effectively in their work.

**Training skills.** Pressure to develop and implement training programs also was expressed frequently. Some participants stated that those who wish to be an HRD scholar-practitioner should possess training skills and an interest in teaching and developing individuals. Possessing this capability is an indicator that an HRD scholar-practitioner can influence positive change.

**Facilitation skills.** Facilitation skills can be used to enhance a training session, or they may be viewed as a stand-alone competency used in discussions or presentations. Whether facilitation is used in association with training or used to provide guidance and structure so that the mission of the organization is accomplished, it is an important competency that was identified by some participants who attributed it to enabling organizational success.

**Management skills.** In this study's context, management skill involves decision-making, planning, and monitoring of projects, time, and people. Management skills are necessary to understand every competing agenda and figure out how to manage politics that influence behaviors and positive change. Participants noted that management skills help drive desired and required changes in the organization. Additionally, effective management skills will help to formulate and carry out plans that will keep the business going in order to facilitate stakeholder satisfaction.

### **Personal Competencies**

Despite the growing knowledge base in the field, HRD still involves complex human interactions and organizational change. As the primary instrument of analysis and change in achieving positive organizational outcomes, HRD scholar-practitioners must possess personal competencies that enable them to continuously develop skills to keep pace with the changing environment, to work with others in managing change, and to think creatively, systematically, and strategically in complicated work situations—all of which can lead to positive outcomes such as evidence-based practice, expertise, innovative solutions, and positive change.

**Continuous learning.** The ability to continuously learn was found to be a critical competency, and participants noted that those who wish to be HRD scholar-practitioners should have the motivation and interest to learn continuously. The belief was that in order to effectively engage in research and manage organizations, HRD scholar-practitioners should involve themselves in learning that enhances their subject knowledge and technical skills. In regard to the positive outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 4, continuous learning can contribute to individual and organizational success.

**Working with others.** The ability to build relationships and collaborate with others is one of the most important competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners. The belief expressed by participants was that maintaining effective professional relationships with investors, customers, and subject matter experts in and outside of the field might someday be helpful in achieving positive work-related outcomes.

**Ethics and integrity.** Some of the participants believed that HRD scholar-practitioners should be a role model in terms of ethics and integrity. Participants noted that one of the main conditions for being an HRD scholar-practitioner is that the person should be ethical in his or her work. An unethical scholar-practitioner can discourage the whole system.

**Problem-solving skills.** Problem solving is a vital skill in an HRD scholar-practitioner's daily work, which is why employers are so keen on it. This competency can influence all four outcomes but has been specifically observed to impact innovative solutions.

**Critical thinking.** Participants mentioned that critical thinking activities have helped them to understand why something has occurred as opposed to just understanding what has occurred. They go through a deliberate thought process to analyze and judge information from a critical standpoint by challenging what is already known. An HRD scholar-practitioner perhaps might use critical thinking to help devise a strategy to achieve business goals.

**Systems thinking.** Systems thinking was identified as a significant theme among the participants. By understanding the system and its changing structures, HRD scholar-practitioners can expand the choices available and champion change interventions to help develop organizations and influence positive change.

**Strategic planning and thinking.** Having a long-term strategic vision with the ability to plan strategically was recognized as an important competency among the participants. Being able to link long-range visions, concepts, and resources to daily work can affect HRD scholar-practitioners' perception and behavior toward desirable outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 4.

### **Process: Strategies**

Formal education, on-the-job learning, professional development, and networking were highlighted by participants as effective mechanisms for integrating research and practice. First, participants discussed how academic training helped them develop critical thinking skills and enabled them to understand and utilize research methods and methodologies. Participants also cited their knowledge and skills gained through decades of work experience gained from on-the-job learning. Unlike formal

education, on-the-job learning provided participants with the workplace tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for them to learn to effectively perform their jobs. Furthermore, participants discussed professional development experience through conference participation. Professional development was defined by participants as advanced professional learning intended to improve competencies and networks. Finally, participants discussed how networking helped them connect with people. Networking is a competency and a strategy that has been recognized as influencing evidence-based practice.

**Output: Evidence-Based Practice, Expertise, Innovative Solution, and Positive Change**

Participants echoed the refrain that a competent HRD scholar-practitioner was able to influence organizational outcomes. Personal attributes, scholarly competencies, practitioner competencies, and broad-based competencies must be transformed into strategies and effectively utilized among activities to achieve positive outcomes such as evidence-based practice, expertise, innovative solution, and positive change.

**Evidence-Based Practice**

According to the literature, there are many factors influencing evidence-based practice (Park, Ahn, & Park, 2015). Perception and attitude toward evidence-based practice has been shown to affect performance (Park et al., 2015). Furthermore, competencies such as knowledge, skills, and abilities have been acknowledged in both this study and in Kormanik et al. (2009) to improve or hinder evidence-based practice

based on proficiency or lack thereof. Finally, Hughes and Gosney's (2016) recent publication has provided mechanisms to bridge the HRD scholar-practitioner gap.

### **Expertise**

Expertise is another output of HRD scholar-practitioners. Ruona and Gilley (2009) argued that HRD scholar-practitioners are experts in the field who possess high-level thinking skills and who employ the research-practice orientation in ways that surpass other HRD professionals in the field. Ruona and Gilley and this study's participants discussed HRD scholar-practitioners' commitment to grounded and informed practice. Thus, scholar-practitioners engage in competency development and engage in research that advances their expertise.

### **Innovative Solution**

Participants shared successful experiences in which innovation was the outcome of their performance. Inherent in innovation is exploring the strategies and developing the competencies to deal with changes and the unknown. For example, one of the participants, FA, mentioned that organizational stakeholders make the mistake of trying to solve problems the same way or of taking the same approach to dealing with change. He suggested that continuous learning and staying current on research provides new ideas for improvement. For example, innovation is a huge part of FA's work. He was able to design very short, dynamic, and attractive YouTube videos using avatars and simulations and link the video to the learning process for his virtual learning program. Clearly, an innovative solution was one outcome to his organization's virtual learning

program. He relied on his leadership ability, project management skill, and knowledge of adult learning to achieve that outcome.

### **Positive Change**

Positive changes such as improvements in the learning and work environment, improved relationships between HRD scholar-practitioners and organizational stakeholders, greater communication between researchers and practitioners, and behavioral changes can occur as a result of competency and strategy utilization.

### **Environmental Forces Influencing Positive Outcomes**

As shown in Figure 4, HRD professionals who strive to become competent HRD scholar-practitioners need to have a combination of personal attributes, competencies, and strategies to influence evidence-based practice, individual expertise, innovation, and positive changes. However, achieving positive organizational outcomes cannot be discussed without acknowledging the political, social, global, and technological forces that influence decisions and behaviors.

### **Political and Legal Forces**

Political and legal forces were singled out by a couple of participants as influencing evidence-based practice. Political forces are concern with the influence of political parties in organizations. HD mentioned that effective politics is about maintaining relationships while achieving results. Participants also discuss legal forces as being critical to the successful operations in their organizations. From the point of views of participants HD and FD, it is important to understand employment laws,



dispute resolution, and litigation procedures provided by the federal and state laws and their effects on evidence-based practice.

### **Sociocultural Forces**

Participants also recognized society and culture as having an effect on evidence-based practice. As society and culture change, organizations must quickly adapt to stay current with the needs of the consumer as well as stay ahead of their customers. A major sociocultural factor that influences HRD scholar-practitioners' work is the change in organizational demographics. As the workforce population ages, for example, HRD scholar-practitioners are forced to adapt and work with the changing generation.

Sociocultural forces are also organizational cultural aspects such as language, values, and attitudes. For example, attitudes towards gender roles and affirmative action have changed drastically. These forces have been found to affect decision making and should not be overlooked in evidence-based practice.

### **Global Economic Forces**

These forces involve changes in the global economy. BM, GT, and LC discussed the work of HRD scholar-practitioners in meeting their businesses' bottom line, meaning that HRD scholar-practitioners should develop business strategies while keeping in mind the fluctuations in economic activities. Economic changes such as interest rate, inflation rate, and supply and demand all play major roles in marketing products and services anywhere in the world. There is no question that globalization has impacted the work of participants. Participants argued that globalization is playing an increasingly important role in evidence-based practice because it has created both opportunities and challenges,

thereby encouraging HRD scholar-practitioners to understand the global economic factors influencing change.

### **Technological Forces**

Technology is changing how individuals work and interact with one another. These forces influence HRD scholar-practitioners' research-practice integration because they provide organizations opportunities to adopt and adapt to new technological innovations. As technology gets more advanced, the work environment continues to become smaller because of social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, etc.), all of which have been recognized by participants as influencing current and future evidence-based practice. For instance, the younger generation prefers to use digital technology to socialize and learn from people all over the world. This effect of changing society in regard to technological changes was discussed by participants FA and BM. While participant FA shared how he relied on technology to collaborate with his virtual teams, BM discussed how technological changes are forcing his team to constantly research and innovate to keep pace with their competitors. These examples reinforce the importance of technological changes in evidence-based practice. Technology can benefit or hinder HRD scholar-practitioners' work.

Contingency theory states that performance is believed to occur when the individual's capabilities are aligned with the needs of the job and the environment in which the organization is embedded (Boyatzis, 2009; Ruckert et al., 1985). Boyatzis (2009) argued that environmental factors such as globalization, economic issues, and technological changes have an important impact on the demonstration of competencies.

Therefore, it is important to recognize the important links between environmental factors, competencies, and implementation strategies. In particular, recognizing the impact of political, economic, sociocultural, and technological influences should be assessed in the development and planning mechanism process so that HRD scholar-practitioners can be proactive in dealing with them.

### **Implications for Theory**

My findings can be explained by contingency theory because the theoretical framework further helped me understand and uncover the underlying forces influencing evidence-based practice, expertise, innovative solution, and positive change of the participants. Moreover, contingency theory encouraged me to think about evidence-based practice as it relates to the whole organization. In this regard, HRD scholar-practitioners, managers, and leaders operating under the principles of contingency theory have to do more than just identify the one or two influences on research-practice integration. They have to be prepared to evaluate multiple inputs that may all be contributing to evidence-based practice. Contingency scholar-practitioners, managers, and leaders have to learn to integrate all of the threads that intertwine to make for effective and efficient decisions, planning, and problem-solving.

In this study, I constructed a new conceptual framework based on HRD scholar-practitioners' career journeys and evidence-based practice experiences. Competencies and evidence-based practice strategies were captured from those experiences and were illustrated in the framework. More empirical studies are needed to test the validity and reliability of this conceptual framework. In addition, more empirical studies can provide

a better understanding of how competencies in combination with strategies influence organizational outcomes. Developing an understanding of this phenomenon will provide better insight into how all the factors influence research and practice integration. According to contingency theory, one must have a good understanding of all that factors that influence an organization's bottom line. The study participants play a role in the organization's bottom line; therefore, understanding the factors that influence their evidence-based practice should not be underappreciated. Questions that should be asked about HRD scholar-practitioners' work should relate to what competencies are needed, what strategies work, with whom do they work, and in what types of context do they work. This is likely to require mixed methods and a better understanding of complexity science.

### **Implications for Research**

The role of the scholar-practitioner in organizational success is emerging. Although there is a growing body of literature in this area, there are, to date, few empirical studies examining either the characteristics of HRD scholar-practitioners that are critical for success or the strategies for developing scholar-practitioner competencies. In this section, I discuss implications for research in three areas: competencies, strategies, and context.

#### **Competencies**

First, we know very little about HRD scholar-practitioners' perception of core competencies. A basic qualitative study aims to capture the essence of a phenomenon using a small samples size (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the methodology used in this

study does not allow findings to be generalized to a larger population. For this study, the target population was also limited because participants had to meet a set of predetermined criteria in order to participate. Participants needed to have at least a master's degree and have at least five years of experience integrating research and practice. In order to enrich these findings, it would be beneficial to extend the sample of scholar-practitioners in and outside the HRD field to determine whether these themes are representative across disciplines. In addition, future studies can be conducted using other research methodologies such as a case study, grounded theory, ethnography, or critical research. For example, although participants in this study were successful in integrating research into their practice, all described facing challenges within their organization's political environment. Future research can employ a case study approach to examine how an organization's political system influences competent performance. In particular, researchers could explore if HRD scholar-practitioners working in the same organization possess the same competencies.

### **Strategies**

Second, although HRD scholar-practitioner evidence-based practice research is fairly new, there is some evidence of what competencies are needed and what strategies are used in promoting research in practice. However, little is known about what combination of strategies work for whom and in what context. There are several studies (e.g., Black, Balneaves, Garossino, Puyat, & Qian, 2015; Titler, 2008) within the healthcare field that address strategies focused on improving evidence-based practice. For instance, *translation science* has guided healthcare professionals in how to best

promote the use of evidence-based practice (Pearson, Jordan, & Munn, 2012; Titler, 2008). Translation science is the exploration of methods, interventions, and factors that influence the adoption of evidence-based practice by individuals in the healthcare field (Titler, 2008). Translation science studies include describing facilitators and barriers to knowledge transfer and utilization (Pearson et al., 2012). Future research can examine how translation science can impact HRD scholar-practitioners' evidence-based practice. Similarly, Hughes and Gosney (2016) and Hughes et al. (2010) discussed other mechanisms for bridging the HRD scholar-practitioner gap. More empirical studies are needed to examine evidence-based practice and developmental strategies of HRD scholar-practitioners. Evidence-based practice strategies have been shown to improve competencies (Black et al., 2015); thus, future research could employ a mixed-method research design to explore the combination of competencies and strategies needed to become a successful HRD scholar-practitioner.

### **Context**

Short et al. (2009) claimed that HRD professionals are able to consistently deliver results regardless of the context. However, findings from this study contradict this notion. My study delivered successful results by considering context. For example, one participant (BM) described having some difficulty navigating a very large company structure because putting theory into practice in a very large organization has a whole other dynamic of organizational politics that come into play. However, an understanding of contextual influences remains piecemeal given the limited number of empirical studies on this subject. Further exploration of contextual factors is needed in

order to be able to understand the competencies and strategies required to successfully integrate research and practice.

### **Implications for Practice**

Competency models provide valuable information for HRD scholars and practitioners that guide their professional development. This study enhanced the understanding of HRD scholar-practitioner competencies and adds to HRD literature on evidence-based practice (Kormanik et al., 2009; Ruona & Gilley, 2009; Short & Shindell, 2009). It also illuminated several means to developing scholar-practitioners. For example, scholars can engage in more action research, practitioners can pursue ongoing professional development, and organizational leaders can cultivate a culture that promotes evidence-based practice. Below, I offer five specific recommendations.

#### **Scholars Engaging in Action Research**

Research indicates that many HRD scholars leave university programs not fully prepared for the challenges in the workplace. In fact, some participants (LC, GT, and MB) mentioned that some scholars serve as academic think-tanks. These participants have a presumption that these scholars make the best professors but are not fully experienced enough to handle practitioners' work. For this reason, scholars should engage in more action research. They should view the world as a living lab that provides valuable data and insights into all the aspects of the research projects and participants.

Action research allows scholars to and gain confidence in their work (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). Specifically, action research projects can influence scholars' thinking skills, attitudes toward the change process, and ways to

continually improve. Furthermore, action research by practitioners affords time to collaborate and discuss research-practice integration strategies as well as share their knowledge with others. Finally, action research allows scholars working as professors to develop competencies and experiences needed to effectively prepare students for the world of practice (Merkel, 2016).

### **Practitioners Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development**

Furthermore, companies can provide ongoing professional development to their HRD practitioners in order to create a shared vision focused on evidence-based practice and to build a continuously learning work culture. Ongoing professional development involves educational activities to enhance competencies (Filipe, Silva, Stulting, & Golnik, 2014). In this study, the importance of ongoing professional development activities manifested itself in influencing longer professional lives, assimilating technological changes, and navigating a complex working environment where HRD scholar-practitioners are challenged to develop and implement immediate change initiatives and training programs. Given these increased emphases, it is obvious that ongoing professional development activity should be a systematic and planned process that develops and maintains professional competence.

Companies can make professional development a priority by providing on-the-job training, teacher training, and conference activities. In addition, career development activities, including financial support for further education, can be elements of an ongoing professional development approach. Having a clear sense of professional development's goals, of how they should be implemented, and of how they should



improve the quality of the program is critical. There are many ways in which HRD professionals can grow in their professions. A variety of professional development options should be available in order to support HRD professionals' work and the diverse needs of HRD scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners. It is particularly important that HRD professionals receive training necessary to not only assist in ongoing professional development programs but to also become knowledgeable about the legality and inevitable changes affecting their responsibilities and rights.

### **Scholars and Practitioners Addressing Organizational Context**

The context of HRD scholar-practitioner research-practice integration needs to be addressed throughout the behavioral process because it is essential to determine the fit between HRD scholar-practitioner competencies, strategies, and settings. The setting in which practice takes place influences successful implementation of evidence to practice (McCormack et al., 2001). For this reason, scholars and practitioners need to address organizational context in both research and practice. Scholars and practitioners need to keep in mind that there is no one way to integrate research and practice; therefore, the competencies and strategies needed to carry out work in one organization may need modification to fit in another organizational context.

### **Leaders and Managers Cultivating an Evidence-Based Practice Culture**

It would be difficult for anyone currently working as an HRD practitioner to not develop strategies and interventions to meet organizational demands. However, HRD practitioners employ activities while not fully aware of the major consequences that can

be revealed in theory and research. For this reason, organizational leaders and managers can encourage and incorporate evidence-based practice in every educational activity.

Evidence-based practice can be a part of every developmental program, beginning with new employee orientation. Reference sources should be cited on slides, handouts, and manuals. Providing website links can also empower practitioners to perform searches themselves (Melnik, Fineout-Overholt, Gallagher-Ford, & Kaplan, 2012). Furthermore, evidence-based practice can be incorporated into training and development activities. In this regard, practitioners can learn and develop competencies related to research and practice. Finally, as suggested by one of the participants (MB), evidence-based practice can be incorporated into strategic planning activities. The purpose here is to create a culture of evidence-based practice within organizations that leads to the employment of practice standards that are built upon research evidence.

### **Curriculum Developers Improving the Educational Curriculum**

Universities can use this study's competency framework to guide curriculum development in graduate HRD programs. For example, one participant (LC) noted that graduate programs are either practice-oriented or sole theory-oriented. These types of programs are unlikely to ask students to read deeply into different theories. The problem with that is students are not taught how to integrate theory into practice. LC argued that while some graduate programs effectively integrate research and practice into their curriculum, other programs need to do a better job of nurturing scholars and practitioners.

Other disciplines have initiated similar steps. For example, in an effort to engage nurses in evidence-based practice, Winsett and Moutseous (2012) adopted Kolb's experiential learning model as a guiding framework, a framework wherein as students were taught each step of the research process, those steps were accompanied by real-world activities. This hands-on approach can give students practical experience on each step of the evidence-based practice. For these reasons, I encourage ongoing collaborative efforts between universities and business leaders. It is critical that curriculum developers continue to identify the essential scholar-practitioner capacities and to identify the methodologies needed to build those competencies so that students can be better prepared for the world of evidence-based practice.

### **Conclusion**

Worldwide political matters, economic crises, globalization, and other changes in recent years have challenged the work of HRD scholar-practitioners. Thus, building and transferring competencies into their work require careful exploration of what qualities make an HRD scholar-practitioner effective with research-practice integration and organizational changes. In general, it will continue to be a challenge for HRD scholar-practitioners to bridge the research and practice gap because of the many issues that can arise. For instance, scholars work on the basis of abstraction, whereas, practitioners deal with concrete, human problems. An ideal solution is to have more scholar-practitioners in organizations who understand the nature of both research and practice. Another solution is to have more collaboration between scholars and practitioners. These

proposals suggest that HRD professionals strive to develop attributes and capabilities that allow them to become competent HRD scholar-practitioners.

Importantly, HRD scholars and practitioners' competencies reflect the notion that evidence-based practice goes beyond academic success to encompass other domains, such as practical experience, business acumen, situation awareness, and drive for excellence. These attributes and qualities also contribute in important ways to their success in research and practice. Thus, competency statements for HRD scholar-practitioners who research, disseminate findings, and employ research in their practice uphold the importance of addressing all of the learning and development domains of competency development. These statements also incorporate the expectation that HRD scholar-practitioners learn how to collaborate with colleagues both within their field and other fields so that, if necessary, they have access to other services and perspectives that can contribute to their research and practice.

In regard to theoretical significance, this study adds to the general literature related to competency models by exploring competency development and superior performance from a theoretical perspective using contingency theory. Changing environmental and organizational contexts can have an important impact on the demonstration of competencies. This study contributes to building theory on competency development based on contingency perspectives, which take into consideration individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics that influence effective performance.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<b>Section</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Preamble</b>	Information about participants will be stored in computer files protected with a password. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.	Data storage
<b>General</b>	Literature in the HRD field identifies a gap between scholars and practitioners (Bing, 2009; Moats & McLean, 2008). A review of the HRD literature shows that little research has been done to explore how HRD scholar-practitioners identify and define their own competencies. Furthermore, there is an unclear understanding of the required competencies for HRD scholar-practitioners. Therefore, this study attempts to explore requisite competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners.	Overview of the research project
<b>Procedures</b>	<p>Selection of participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant must be an HRD scholar-practitioner.</li> <li>• Second, the participant must actively engage in scholarly activities that involve publication in the field.</li> <li>• Third, the participant must be an active practitioner in the HRD field.</li> <li>• Finally, the participant must have at least 3 years of experience as a HRD scholar-practitioner.</li> </ul> <p>Establishing trustworthiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.</li> <li>• Reflection journal.</li> <li>• Subjectivity statement.</li> </ul>	Steps in conducting each participant to ensure uniformity in data collection
<b>Research Instrument</b>	Interviews utilizing open-ended questions. Document analysis: job description, organizational chart, competency model.	Structured to ensure uniformity in data collection
<b>Data Analysis Guidelines</b>	<p>Stage 1: Developing a code list.</p> <p>Stage 2: Unitizing the information.</p> <p>Stage 3: Categorizing the information.</p> <p>Stage 4: Identifying themes.</p> <p>Stage 5: Legitimizing identified themes.</p>	Guidelines and overview of data analysis
<b>Appendix</b>	Participation request letter. Consent forms. Research questions.	Documents participants receive

**APPENDIX B**

**RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This email serves as invitation to invite you to participate in a research project examining core competencies as perceived by Human Resource Development (HRD) scholar-practitioners. This study will be led by Saphon Ren, graduate student of HRD program at Texas A&M University, under the guidance of Dr. Jia Wang, professor in the school of EHRD at Texas A&M University. The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of individuals in the donut business. You have been selected to be a possible participant because you are an HRD scholar-practitioner.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: (1) engage in two interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes for the first and 30 minutes for the second meeting; and (2) review the interview transcript to verify the accuracy. I, a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, will be contacting you directly for setting up an interview schedule and location of your convenience. I will be the one conducting the interviews as well. Your interview transcripts will be stored securely in my office for a period of three years. All the transcripts and recordings with identifying information will be destroyed as soon as my dissertation is defended successfully. Only I will have access to any data collected.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with the researchers or Texas A&M University being affected. The risks associated with this study are minimal. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form indicating in writing your willingness to be a part of the study.

Your identity will not be disclosed in any fashion. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the two investigators will have access to the records.

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

If you would like to be in the study, please contact me at [saphon@tamu.edu](mailto:saphon@tamu.edu) or by phone at (281) 622-9655. Thank you very much for your support!

Sincerely,  
Saphon Ren, Doctoral Candidate  
Educational Human Resource Development Program  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** HRD Scholar-Practitioner Competencies: Perspectives from HRD Professionals

**You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Saphon Ren, researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.**

#### **Why Is This Study Being Done?**

The purpose of this study is to explore core competencies as perceived by HRD scholar-practitioners.

#### **Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you have been identified as an HRD scholar-practitioner. To increase the likelihood of gathering rich, meaningful details, you must be an HRD scholar-practitioner and who have had experiences with working for at least 5 years.

#### **How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?**

Seven people (participants) will be invited to participate in this study locally.

#### **What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?**

The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

#### **What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?**

You will be asked to discuss your perception of HRD scholar-practitioners core competencies. Your participation in this study will include two interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes for the first and 30 minutes for the second meeting.

You may be removed from the study by the investigator for this reason:

- If you do not meet selection criteria

#### **Will Photos, Video Or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?**

The researchers will make an audio recording during the study so that the researchers can depict the interplay of voice, meaning, and situation after the interview; only if you

give your permission to do so. Indicate your decision below by initialing in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

**Are There Any Risks To Me?**

The things that you will be doing are no more risks than you would come across in everyday life. In other words, there are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include anxiety, embarrassment, and social stigma (shame/disgrace).

Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions/procedures that are asked of you will be stressful or upsetting. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to.

**Will There Be Any Costs To Me?**

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

**Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?**

You will not be paid for being in this study.

**Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?**

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in computer files protected with a password. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

**Who may I Contact for More Information?**

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jia Wang, to tell him/her about a concern or complaint about this research at [jiawang@tamu.edu](mailto:jiawang@tamu.edu). You may also contact the Protocol Director, Saphon Ren, at 281.622.9655 or [saphon@tamu.edu](mailto:saphon@tamu.edu).

For questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at 1.855.795.8636 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**What if I Change My Mind About Participating?**

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researchers. Any new information discovered about the research will be provided to you. This information could affect your willingness to continue your participation.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

**I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:**

Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Presenter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

### DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

Please provide your email address \_\_\_\_\_

	18-25	26-35	36-55	56-70	>70	
1.	What best describes your age?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	How long have you been in your profession?	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-8 yrs.	9-15 yrs.	>16 yrs.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	How many years have you been a HRD scholar-practitioner?	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-8 yrs.	9-15 yrs.	>16 yrs.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	What is your highest education level?	High School	Bachelor Degree	Master Degree	Professional Degree	Doctorate Degree
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	What is your current employment status?	Full-time	Part-time	volunteer	unemployed	retired
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



		1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-8 yrs.	9-15 yrs.	>16 yrs.
6.	How long have you utilized research in practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**APPENDIX E**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. What is your career journey like?
  - a. How did you get started?
  - b. What jobs and experiences have led you to your current position?
2. Why do you see yourself as a HRD scholar-practitioner?
  - a. How do you integrate research into your practice?
  - b. How often do you do it?
3. What are some successful experiences in which you used research to guide practice?

Please recall specific examples.

  - a. What was the context?
  - b. What did you do?
  - c. What was the outcome of using research in practice?
  - d. Why did you consider this experience successful?
4. What are some challenging experiences you faced while integrating research and practice?
  - a. What was the context?
  - b. What did you do?
  - c. What was the outcome of using research in practice?
  - d. What challenges did you encounter in integrating research into practice?

5. Reflecting on your experiences, what skills do you possess that have enabled you to bring research into your practice?
6. In your opinion, what skills are essential to become a successful scholar-practitioner?

## APPENDIX F

### DATA MANAGEMENT SAMPLE

*Interviewer:* Can you please share an example of a successful experience in which you integrated research and practice? What was the context like? What did you do? What was the outcome? And, why do you consider this experience successful?

*Interviewee:* Okay, so let me see if I can think of an example here. So an example, so one of the things that has – that I worked from recently is we were changing business models so the organization was trying to morph into a category management type business model for all of our – it's not really retail sales because it's government. But that kind of work, and we're organized in all of our offerings, and to a category management philosophy as opposed to just a regular portfolio of business lines philosophy.

So my job was to make sure that the behaviors of the people that needed to change, changed, and that the communications was done, and all of that. But it was basically not the – I wasn't responsible for the business model side of the change. That was being done from a different group. I was responsible for making sure that the business model change was successfully implemented, and didn't impact the bottom line because people were tripping over themselves. So just taking care of the people, make sure they were set up there. There was no framework, I was brought in probably a year too late, so I was already behind the eight ball, and I had to create an organizing framework over around how all the different moving parts of what I needed to do around educating employees, and communicating to employees, and altering behavior, and all of those different pieces.

So I was able to take some mental space, and shut myself in a room with a blackboard or a white board, and draw on theory around adult learning, and knowing that experiential learning, and the opportunities for just-in-time job aids, and things like that were more positively received by adults when learning something new. The theories around employee and internal communication, and the theories around simple rules for change, and around the complexity change management component, and things like that. I was able to – I had all of those things swimming in my head, and

was able to over the course of the day in a strategic planning session white board out what that framework was going to look like in practice based on all of these disparate theories that were swimming around in my head.

So the result was not theoretical, the result was here are the different and here's our current state and future state, and here's the gap, and here's how we're going to close it. It was very pragmatic, it was very action oriented, it was easy to determine to see what the future vision was so people could resonate with it. It was story telling oriented, but it was all informed by all this disparate pieces of theory that had resonated with me throughout my studies. So that's an example of how I do that, and then I take that framework and implement it with my so that's what I do. Competency wise the first competency is really understanding the theory in terms of – it's more than just being able to regurgitate something that's written down in some paper somewhere.

It's understanding the theory so fundamentally that you can tell somebody else about it in your own words in a way that makes sense to them. You can tell your kindergartener about a theory and they can – they get it; they get the main concept. So I don't know what you would call that competency, but it's really that – I almost want to say it's like that Kirkpatrick Level Four level of understanding of the theories. Not only do you know it, but it's now part of your – the fiber of your being. You just – you can dumb it down and explain it to a five-year-old without any problem. That's the first step in my mind, because I don't have enough brain power to hold all of the regurgitation details of all these theories in my head.

I only have enough brain power to hold the bottom line so what parts of the theory in my head. So being able to bottom line and so what every theory, and keep those pieces in your head at least enough to know what to look up if you need to remember something that's a key competency. Another key competency is being able to pull together to system's thinking I think is what you might call it. Being able to pull together seemingly disparate pieces of theory together in order to solve the specific problem. So I'm pulling things from complexity theory, and from doing the adult learning theory, and I'm putting them together to create some kind of framework for a change management.

They're – if you look at them separately Dewey and Complexity theory don't really have much to do with each other, but being able to see the common threads, and pull the pieces together that you need in order to make a successful practitioner based program I think is really key as well. Then the third piece is really that synthesis and storytelling component. You're responsible as the scholar-practitioner for synthesizing it, and making it action oriented. You need to be able to tell it in a compelling way so that you get buy-in from the people who either need to give you money to implement it or approve the planning or you need to be able to make that compelling case, and you don't do that by citing theoretical articles.

You do that by telling a story or sharing the results of a case study in one of the empirical papers that you've read.

## APPENDIX G

### DATA ANALYSIS SAMPLE

Levels	Competencies	Quotes	Demonstrates
Personal Competencies	Communication skills	<p>“You need to be able to tell it in a compelling way so that you get buy-in from the people who either need to give you money to implement it or approve the planning or you need to be able to make that compelling case, and you don't do that by citing theoretical articles”</p> <p>“It's not about academic writing, but it's about corporate business writing, being able to tell a compelling story in order to get people to take action”</p>	<p>Demonstrating ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders through written and verbal communication, presentation skills, persuasion and negotiation</p>
	Self-development	<p>“I always recommend that if my people are trying to move on and move up I always recommend them trying to figure out what they want to learn more about, and finding a detail opportunity. Even if that – it doesn't have to be a full-time detail, it can just be raising your hand to participate on a project”</p>	<p>Involving proactively taking actions to improve personal capability</p>
	Critical evaluation	<p>“...critical thinking, that's another one”</p> <p>“I'd rather hire somebody with critical thinking, and then teach them the technical skills rather than have somebody who's technically really skilled and try to teach them how to think critically”</p>	<p>Applying critical thinking and making sound decision based on evaluation of available information</p>
	Creative problem solving & decision making	<p>“There was no framework, I was brought in probably a year too late, so I was already behind the eight ball, and I had to create an organizing framework over around how all the different moving parts of what I needed to do around educating employees, and communicating to employees, and altering behavior, and all of those different pieces.”</p>	<p>Demonstrating of behaviors that enable one to identify and solve problems by understanding the situation, seeking additional information, developing and weighing alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate</p>

Academic Competencies	Research methodology/ processes	“So they're purely quantitative, not paying any attention to the qualitative aspects of picking the right hire or taking into account”	course of action given the circumstances Demonstrating knowledge and skill/practice regarding both quantitative and qualitative design and analysis
	Dissemination of Research/ Scholarly Writing	<p>“So when it comes to – so I'm very conscientious that whenever I'm presenting things at work that it doesn't become too academic. Everything that I do, even if it's the foundation, is things that I've leveraged from scholarly work”</p> <p>“So I use my knowledge – my scholarly knowledge as the foundational organizing principle of how I'm doing my strategies and action planning, but I present everything at a fifth-grade reading level”</p> <p>“So I try to become the conduit to translate theory that I know into practice, and help insure that I'm going to be successful, and not fall into the trap of doing what's always been done”</p> <p>“It's understanding the theory so fundamentally that you can tell somebody else about it in your own words in a way that makes sense to them”</p>	Scholarly distribution of research in written and oral form



## APPENDIX H

### DATA ANALYSIS WITH MEMBER CHECKING

Competencies from [redacted] interview

Levels	Competencies	Quotes	Demonstrates
Personal Competencies	Communication skills	<p>"You need to be able to tell it in a compelling way so that you get buy in from the people who either need to give you money to implement it or approve the planning or you need to be able to make that compelling case, and you don't do that by citing theoretical articles"</p> <p>"It's not about academic writing, but it's about corporate business writing, being able to tell a compelling story in order to get people to take action"</p>	Demonstrating ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders through written and verbal communication, presentation skills, persuasion and negotiation
	Self-development	<p>"I always recommend that if my people are trying to move on and move up I always recommend them trying to figure out what they want to learn more about, and finding a detail opportunity. Even if that - it doesn't have to be a full time detail, it can just be raising your hand to participate on a project"</p>	Involving proactively taking actions to improve personal capability
	Critical evaluation	<p>"...critical thinking, that's another one"</p> <p>"I'd rather hire somebody with critical thinking, and then teach them the technical skills rather than have somebody who's technically really skilled and try to teach them how to think critically"</p>	Applying critical thinking and making sound decision based on evaluation of available information
	Creative problem solving & decision making	<p>"There was no framework, I was brought in probably a year too late, so I was already behind the eight ball, and I had to create an organizing framework over around how all the different moving parts of what I needed to do around educating employees, and communicating</p>	Demonstrating of behaviors that enable one to identify and solve problems by understanding the situation, seeking additional information, developing and

*integrated research & practice*  
*to these competency*

*"someone who can write really well"*  
*Suggestions to future HR*

*"Continuous process improvement"*  
*continuous learning*  
*another suggestion*

*#1*

*you were brought in a year too late*  
*systems thinking*

*what you're working on...  
 recently is changing Business model  
 your job was to make sure that the behaviors of people that needed to change, changed  
 contain wisdom, etc.*

		to employees, and altering behavior, and all of those different pieces.”	weighing alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate course of action given the circumstances
<b>Academic Competencies</b>	Research methodology/ processes	“So they’re purely quantitative, not paying any attention to the qualitative aspects of picking the right hire or taking into-account”	Demonstrating knowledge and skill/practice regarding both quantitative and qualitative design and analysis
	Dissemination of Research/ Scholarly Writing	“So when it comes to – so I’m very conscientious that whenever I’m presenting things at work that it doesn’t become too academic. Everything that I do, even if it’s the foundation, is things that I’ve leveraged from scholarly work” “So I use my knowledge – my scholarly knowledge as the foundational organizing principle of how I’m doing my strategies and action planning, but I present everything at a fifth grade reading level” “So I try to become the conduit to translate theory that I know into practice, and help insure that I’m going to be successful, and not fall into the trap of doing what’s always been done” “It’s understanding the theory so fundamentally that you can tell somebody else about it in your own words in a way that makes sense to them”	Scholarly distribution of research in written and oral form
<b>Job Competencies</b>	Theory/research to practice ability	“So all of the scholarly piece informs me in the white board stage as we identify the problem, and the potential ways to resolve that problem, and how to get from A to B. As we’re working through that on	Effectively applying theory/research to practice

*e.g. office of personnel  
not pay attention to the  
qualitative aspects of picking  
the right hire or taking into-  
account”*

*Dissemination of  
Research/ Scholarly  
Writing*

*Being a good  
scholar  
synthesizing  
research  
into research  
what happens  
in the*

*translation  
of scholarly*

*Your recent  
change mgmt  
project  
where you off  
shoot your  
in a room to  
brainstorm  
& map out  
the problem*

*convey  
much explanation*

## APPENDIX I

### REFLECTIVE JOURNAL SAMPLE

- July 30, 2016 11:31 pm I am an HRD scholar researching other HRD scholar-practitioners. I am a novice. And so far, all of my participants are experts in this field. I am concern that I will not be able to relate to their stories. Because debate about bias in qualitative research is still an unresolved problem, I should be concerned about my role as the main instrument in the data collection and analysis process.
- Aug. 7, 2016 1:00 pm I am getting ready for my first interview. I am very excited, but overwhelmed with the amount of preparation I have to do.
- Aug. 7, 2016 2:25 pm The first interview went well, but I feel that future ones can be improved.