

HRD Forum — Viewpoint

HRD Scholarly Practice at AHRD 2018: Trading Secrets

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Prior to the February 2018 Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference in the Americas the Scholar Practitioner Special Interest Group (SP SIG) held a pre-conference workshop to, in organizer Darren Short's words, "get the band back together". In this, the Academy's 25th anniversary year, it seemed like the right time to reconnect with a number of former SP SIG leaders who have left AHRD and focus vital conversation around a number of topics of current and future relevance to those who engage in scholarly practice in HRD. Darren's vision, encapsulated in the theme of the pre-conference *Trading Secrets: Addressing Human Resource Development Challenges & Opportunities* — was borne of an ongoing desire to examine how a research-to-practice way of working in HRD makes sense for a field that is, by its very nature, about how people engage in work.

Fifteen presenters and facilitators contributed their subject matter knowledge as well as their academic and practitioner expertise for a combined 300+ years of experience sharing their research and ideas in 10-minute lightning presentations, 40-minute presentations, and 100-minute deep dive conversations. One of the most valuable aspects of the two-day programme was the wealth of time for networking to reconnect with old friends, make new connections, and build valuable mentoring relationships. For those who work in HRD and engage in scholarly practice, this kind of programme may be the only time they are able to connect with like others with whom they can share meaningful conversation about how to use the literature to inform the ways in which they can address HRD challenges in organizations.

Scholar practitioners, applied researchers, and others from higher education, corporate, government, non-profit, and consultants shared time focusing on how to make organizations better through research and discussed how to help researchers conceptualize the implications for practice. From talking about engaging creativity in HRD to considering the impact of technology and globalization, participants had an opportunity to deepen their thinking and their relationships with each other through thoughtful dialogue.

Some of the most interesting discussions centred on the ongoing consideration of what it means to be a scholar practitioner and whether labelling this way of working constrains or limits our ability to push our boundaries. We challenged each other to think about organizations as communities and to question why we may not feel comfortable challenging structural norms to claim our value in organizations. Moreover, we shared our experiences with developing learning organizations in times of social, political, and national identity shifts.

Finally, it was agreed among the participants that we must continue to challenge the dominant thinking in organizations and break through the fears of innovation, difference, and complication that exist at all levels. We determined that HRD is uniquely situated to understand how the relationships within organizations are the foundation upon which stakeholder engagement can be engaged. This concept is relevant not only to the work we do but to our scholar practitioner connection to each other as well. We recognized that in order to continue to be productive in scholarly practice we must seek out collaborative research with academic partners and create further conversation about how to facilitate learning in operational contexts. In doing so, we will continue to be a vital and vibrant part of AHRD and build better organizations through research.

The Author

Sarah is CEO of Anthology Consulting and has recently been appointed as tenure-track assistant professor at Western Carolina University in their Masters HR program. She is the former Chair of the Academy of HRDs Scholar Practitioner Special Interest Group in HRD. In January Sarah joined the Editorial Board of the *IJHRDPP&R* as an Associate Editor.