

A Study on Value-Perception Priority of Human Resource Development (HRD) Practitioners for Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP) in the Korean Context

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The current research sought to measure the value-perception priorities of Korean HRD professionals based on a modified previously developed HRD value matrix. Findings show that Korean HRD practitioners perceived the learning process and performance-related values as more important than environmental factor-related values on both individual and organizational levels. Finally, significant differences were not found for the value-priority based on gender, year of experience, and occupations.

Keywords: HRD Practice, WLP Practice, HRD Practitioners' Value Perception

In the transition from HRD to WLP, two changes are noteworthy. One change is its focus on learning rather than training. Unlike training, which is done *to* people, learning is something that is done *by* people. The other is that it addresses both individual and organizational needs employing learning as a tool to achieve the desired performance improvement within an organizational setting (Rothwell, Sanders & Soper, 1999; Rothwell & Sredl, 2000). While debates still exist regarding the underlying theories and philosophies of HRD (Bates & Chen, 2005), it is apparent that HRD practices and research have evolved along with the demands of the field. One of the issues constantly raised by practitioners and researchers is the value orientation when it comes to the basis of the field of HRD, because the values are important for understanding individual behavior and worldview. Since the values reflect the generalized and organized conceptions of what people view as desirable and undesirable relative to person-environment interaction and interpersonal relations (Kluckhohn, 1956, as cited by Bates & Chen, 2004, 2005), the values of HRD professionals and practitioners must have changed as the field itself changed.

Problem statement

Recent research by Bates and Chen (2002, 2004; Bates, Chen & Hatcher, 2002) revealed the value orientation of HRD professionals in various contexts. According to Bates and Chen (2005), internal values "are important for understanding individual behaviors and worldviews because they are a part of everyone's cognitive and psychological character, tend to be global in scope, transcend specific situations, and are hierarchically organized to become part of a relatively enduring system" (p.346). Bates and Chen (2002, 2004) conducted a rigorous literature review and the aforementioned empirical study with an HRD perspective, which focused more on individual and group learning with training and other methods. Still, they investigated with the perspective of HRD rather than WLP, which reflects the current demands on the field. Despite the plentiful literature published about WLP recently, little research could be found on the values of practitioners through the WLP perspective. Similar other countries, the focus of studies are still on HRD rather than WLP in Korea. Thus, the investigation of the value of HRD practitioners in Korean context could uncover how the HRD value matrix are perceived and can be applied in WLP context.

Research Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the internal value perception of HRD practitioners from the WLP perspective. Based on previous research regarding how HRD professionals and practitioners believe the HRD values should be viewed (Bates & Chen, 2002, 2004), the goal of this research is to move further toward for developing

a set of WLP value-orientation constructs and a tool of measure that reflect those constructs in the Korean HRD context. Following research question guided the entire research:

1. Is the HRD value-matrix in the WLP environment valid compared with the original HRD value-matrix?
 - a. What correlations exist among the HRD-related six-value entity?
 - b. What is the value-perception priority for HRD practice depends on demographic variables?
2. How is the HRD value-matrix in WLP environment related in the Korean HRD context?

Significance of Research

Aforementioned, despite of the change of the field from HRD, which focus more on training, to WLP, which more emphasizing learning, there is no research found regarding the value-perception from WLP perspective. As Bates and Chen(2005) explained, the value describes how an individual feels the world should work or how he or she would like it to work. Therefore, exploration of the internal value perception of HRD practitioners from WLP perspectives showed how the field has been changed. Particularly, by focusing of Korean context, the study can serve as groundwork for measuring the current status of HRD practices and practitioners in a view of WLP perspective.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

First, prior to investigating the value-perceptions of HRD practitioners, the research identified and developed the conceptual diagram of the HRD value perception change, which includes (a) the relationship between value perception of HRD professionals and influential external factors in terms of the HRD paradigm shift and management trend changes, and (b) the relations between the value priority and HRD practitioners' perception of their roles and competencies.

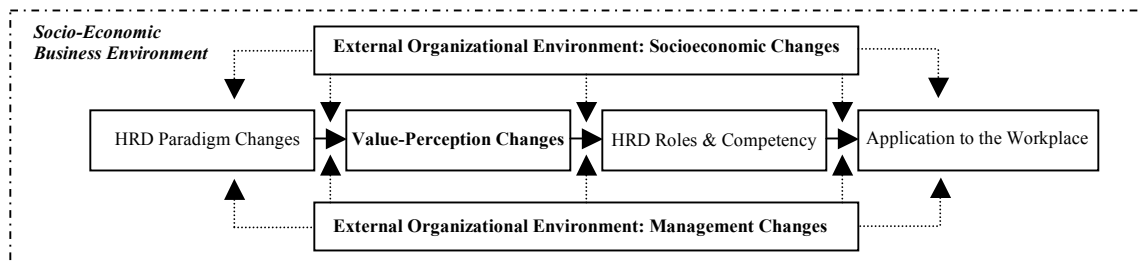


Figure 1. The relations between external environment and changes of HRD value-perceptions.

Three key studies of HRD value priority investigation (Bates and Chen, 2004, 2005; and Bates, Chen & Hatcher, 2002), furthermore, were adapted in order to gain the insight of value-perception examining. More importantly, the value-belief theory (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961) was utilized as a fundamental research perception. Consistent with this theory, certain individuals' value-perceptions, as mentioned previously, emerge from the social-interaction with other individuals and external environmental factors; and are able to guide the cognitive decision-making process so as to appropriate behavioral outcomes such as behavioral intention and behavior evaluation framework (Bates & Chen, 2005). To design the primary conceptual framework of the present research, the following definitions of *HRD* and *WLP* were significantly regarded:

HRD is “the integrated use of training development, organization development, and career development to improve individuals, group, and organizational effectiveness.” (McLagan, 1989, p.7) and WLP is “the integrated use of learning and other interventions for the purpose of improving individual and organizational performance. It uses a systematic process of analyzing performance and responding to individual, group, and organizational needs. WLP creates positive progressive change within organizations by balancing human, ethical, technological, and operational considerations.” (Rothwell, Sanders, and Soper, 1999, p.5).

HRD values of practice “should be theoretically and ethically sound. HRD calls upon theories from multiple disciplines. Thus, the problem of connecting sound theory and sound practice within a

theoretically sound and ethical framework is an important part of HRD theory and practice (Swanson, 1995, p. 208).”

The description of those two definitions of *HRD* and *WLP* represents at least three major key concepts: (a) HRD and WLP should provide the appropriate working environment for both the individuals’ higher performance and organizational development (input), (b) individual and organizational performance improvement are achieved by the HRD and WLP practitioners’ guidance of learning and organizational change (process), and (c) individuals’ performance improvement and positive organizational change and performance improvement (output) within sound aggregation of theory and practice (see Figure 2). Based on the integration of reviewed definitions and application of previous research, the following conceptual outline was developed for guiding the current research on the value-perception of Korean HRD practitioners in a view of WLP perspective:

	<i>Input</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Output</i>
Individual Level	Creating Positive Working Environment Through Meaningful Work-Motivation	Building Individuals’ Competencies Through Learning Process	Improving Individuals’ Performance
Organization Level	Creating Positive Organizational Culture	Building supportive Organizational Learning System	Improving Organizational Performance
	<i>Workplace</i>	<i>Learning</i>	<i>Performance</i>

Figure 2. HRD practitioners’ value matrix based on the perspective of WLP

HRD Value Propositions in The Historical Perspectives

The origin of the terminology Human Resource Development (HRD) dates back to the 1960s and to Leonard Nadler and Nadler (1968) coined the term of HRD and developed a modality that treats HRD as having three key theme components: training education, and development. Since mid-1980s, various researchers have focused on competency-based HRD, and developed competency models for HRD practitioners (McLagen, 1989; Rothwell, Sanders, and Sper, 1999; Bernthal, Colteryahn, Davis, Naughton, Rothwell, & Wellins, 2004). More recently, the terms of WLP (Workplace Learning and Performance) was introduced by ASTD models for workplace learning performance, in 1999. In 2004, the results of ASTD competency study: Mapping the future (Bernthal, et al.) addressed the more expanded roles and competency of WLP practitioners for performance improvement for both individual-level and organization-level. Based on the historical analysis of trend-shifting of HRD practitioners’ roles and competencies, we can found that the concept of HRD has been developed continuously, and according to the changes, so has the perception of HRD practitioners’ roles and competencies. The changing of perception on the task-roles and competencies might be occurred following by the changes of practitioners’ internal value perception, which refer to generalized organized conceptions of what people view as desirable and undesirable relative to person-environment interactions and interpersonal relations (Kluckhohn, 1956). Accordance with the current fierce global and fast changing economic circumstances, the value perceptions of HRD practitioners’ is steadily being changed.

Socioeconomic Paradigm Shift

The modern economy was started with Taylor’s scientific management theory (Weisbord, 2004). One of Taylor’s most important concepts was that management had to control the paying field and workers to control quality, quantity, and costs (Weisbord, 2004, p53). According to Dubois and Rothwell (2004), the primary role of HR-related practitioners was that of a “traffic cop,” at that ancient age, someone who controls and manages workers in a timely manner and adjusts and regulates the working process.

Secondly, in the mid-1900s two world wars and McGregor’s Theory (1960) was significant factors underlying economic and management evolution. According to the human-oriented approach (Weisbord, 2004), beyond the systematical scientific management approach (Taylor, 1915), the paradigm of HRD was altered to individuals’ training and development more than simple training for management revenue. Two world wars were taken into account for the reasons of (a) the social issue of the re-training of post-war veterans to be fit into normal industrial sites (Orilvie & Stork, 2003), and (b) the development of training modules for individuals’ effective, immediate results of re-trainings.

Third, there is no doubt about the enormous contribution of technology to the revolutionary economic evolution (Collins, 2000). Current business industry is using this fantastic technology, and the ways and scopes that have been worked on are changing dramatically along with advanced technology (Stolovitic & Keeps, 1999).

Finally, the primary focus and concerns of organizations have shifted from management itself to the human-side revolution, and then from human-side issues to optimal operational technology. In this regard, intangible environmental factors around organizations have been given more focus for the competitive advantage, even for survival itself. Among the various environmental features, at least two major concepts might be considered: (a) ethical trust with the internal and external environment (Buchholz, 1998); and (b) appropriate response to organizational change (Drucker, 2002).

HRD Paradigm Shift

In the early stage (mid-1900s) of HRD, “Training and Development” was the main focus of HRD practitioners. The primary concern of HRD was *improving individuals’ knowledge, skills, and attitude* based on the Instructional Systems Design (ISD) model (Rothwell, Sanders & Soper, 1999). More focus was given to simple training, expecting that the results of training should be immediate; however, less focus was given to the individuals’ learning process or organizational performance improvement. The second paradigm shifted to the learning process of individuals and organizational improvement through *integrating the learning process* (McLagan, 1989, 1997).

A review of HRD paradigm and organizational learning-related literature suggest that there are at least three primary concerns of HRD practice. First, HRD practitioners’ perceptual roles are associated with education or learning for individuals for the improvement of capacity at the individual, group, and organizational levels in the organizational environment (Swanson, 1995). Secondly, beyond learning interventional roles, HRD practice should be responsible for the conscious *organizational change agent* (Dubois & Rothwell, 2004). The role of HRD practice is, thus, to “to weave a continuous and enhanced capacity to learn, adapt, and change into individuals’ task-competencies and organizational systematic learning culture” (Bates & Chen, 2005, p. 348).

Finally, more recently, numerous research studies (Swanson, 1995, 1998; Torraco & Swanson, 1995) have been conducted to investigate the effective achievement of HRD implications in terms of return of investment. This trend addresses not only a theoretical disciplinary concept, but the actual performance should be considered in the fields of HRD practice (Swanson, 1998). Furthermore, *performance-oriented HRD practice*, for both individual and organizational levels, is a critical paradigm of HRD practice.

Methodology and Approach

The primary research conceptual framework (figure 2) followed each of the three value-perception domains by two different levels: (a) *individual level* -- creating a positive working environment, building individuals’ competencies through the learning process, and improving individuals’ performance; and (b) *organization level* -- creating positive organizational culture, building an organizational learning system and improving organizational performance. The target sample of this research was the HR field practitioners in Korean business organizations. A total of 106 Korean HR practitioners responded to the survey among 212 HR practitioners in 39 Korean companies. Among the total respondents, 48.1% were male and 51.9% were female. The respondents’ length of experience in a professional occupation was evenly distributed: 10.4% reported having less than one year of experience; 38.7%, one to three years; 29.2%, three to five years; and 21.7%, more than 5 years. In the case of the occupational position, 31.1% were entry level; 30.2% were middle-level manager; and 38.7% were higher than senior level manager.

Instrument

The original instrument of the current research was adapted from Bates and Chen (2004, 2005). Thirty-five questionnaires were utilized to measure the six-HRD value variables. However, in the current research, some of the conceptual meaning (two value domains and 7 items) of the value-matrix was modified by adapting the fundamental WLP perspective in terms of the environmental factors considering the Korean HRD context. A web-based survey with Survey monkey web agency, was developed through systematic validation processes, including language translation, from English to Korean, by two of the Korean HRD practitioners and a university professor who were conferred a doctoral degree from the University in the U.S., and backward translation, from Korean to English, to ensure the reliability of the translation process by one Korean government officer who is currently in the U.S. and finishing his doctoral degree in the field of HRD. Following the results of those processes, minor changes were conducted to develop the final version of the survey questionnaire. The revision of survey was limited to choose of terms and designed of survey. The original perception and construct were not changed. The participants received emails that contained the address of the web-case survey site. In survey questionnaire, a five-point Likert-type scale measurement was used, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). At the final stage of this survey, some of the individuals’ demographic-related items were included: gender, types of occupation, years of field experience, and types of organizations. In the scale reliability test of finally modified instrument, the Cronbach’s

alpha coefficient ranged from .75 to .88, and the overall Cronbach alpha coefficient, in the current research, for the whole 35 items was .94; thus, according to Briggs and Cheek (1986), those results were considered in the acceptable range in terms of scale reliability.

Data analysis

In order to identify the most appropriated answers for the two of research questions, several quantitative statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 13.0. To answer the first research question, based on comparison between the previous research results and the current research results, scale-reliability and correlation analysis was conducted. In order to identify the priority rank orders according to the comparison and classifying the significant differences for the demographic variables, t-test was conducted. Finally, in order to discover the existing correlations among the defined HRD six-value matrix, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis was operated.

Results and Findings

The mean score for each of the six domains was ranked from a high score of 4.41 for improving individuals' performance (IPI) to a low of 3.64 for creating a positive work environment through meaningful work motivation (CPWI). Descriptive statistics of mean-value ranking by two gender and occupation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Scale Reliability and Descriptive Analysis by Gender and Occupations*

	√**	Gender						Occupations			
		Total (n=106)		Male(n=51)		Female(n=52)		HRD (n=71)		Others*(n=35)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
IPI	.86	4.41	0.55	4.52	0.45	4.31	0.62	4.42	0.44	4.38	0.73
OPI	.88	4.31	0.63	4.33	0.55	4.30	0.69	4.32	0.51	4.31	0.82
BICL	.75	4.29	0.48	4.44	0.34	4.15	0.54	4.32	0.30	4.23	0.71
BOLS	.82	4.26	0.54	4.28	0.44	4.25	0.63	4.32	0.37	4.15	0.78
CPOC	.88	3.81	0.68	3.77	0.61	3.84	0.74	3.78	0.58	3.86	0.85
CPWE	.85	3.64	0.66	3.63	0.72	3.65	0.61	3.59	0.56	3.75	0.84

Note. IPI = Improving Individuals Performance; OPI = Improving Organizational Performance; BICL = Building Individuals' Competencies through Learning Process; BOLS = Building Supportive Organizational Learning System; CPOC = Creating Positive Organizational Culture; CPWI = Creating Positive Working Environment through Meaningful Work-Motivation.

* includes HRM, OD, and CD ** represents scale reliability

Based on the collective analyses of the perceived priority, the performance-related domains (IPI: $M = 4.41$, OPI: $M = 4.31$) and the learning process-related domains (BICL: $M = 4.29$, BOLS: $M = 4.26$) were perceived as more important than the creating and providing work environment-related domains (CPOC; $M = 3.81$, CPWE: $M = 3.64$) at both the individual and organizational levels by overall respondents. There was a slightly different rank priority by gender and occupation; however, the domain perceived as most important was associated with the individuals' performance improvement regardless of the different variables.

In order to investigate the inter-correlation among the six value variables, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient analysis was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 2. This correlation analysis represents that most of the six value domains have a statistically significant interrelationship with one another at the .001 significant level, and the correlation between two of the six value domains (IPI and CPOC; IPI and CPWE) were not found to be significant. From a broader perspective, the concerns of the responding HRD-related practitioners about the priority of most of the six values are significantly associated with one another.

Among the results (see table 2), the most powerful interrelated value domains are OPI and BOLS ($r = .80$, $p < .001$), and this result suggests the improving organizational performance perception has a positive and powerful interrelation with the building supportive organizational learning system domain, based on the HRD practitioners' value perceptions. Two other interesting results of this analysis concerned the relationship between IPI and BOLS ($r = .64$, $p < .001$) and between OPI and BOLS ($r = .80$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that respondents who ranked performance improvement-related (IPI and OPI) values highly also perceived the building supportive organizational learning system-related value as a guiding value in terms of the strength of the relations (Cohen, 1988). The statistically significant correlations were identified between two work-environmental values (creating positive working environment through meaningful work-motivation and creating positive organizational culture, $r = .71$, $p < .001$), two learning process values (building individuals' competencies through learning process and building supportive organizational learning system, $r = .70$, $p < .001$), and two performance-related values (improving

individuals' performance and improving organizational performance, $r = .70$, $p < .001$). Thus, two of each of the value domains under the same levels (individual and organizational) have stronger correlations with each other and those correlation results support the logical validity of the six-HRD value matrix construction in the WLP practices.

Table 2: *Correlations Analysis for Six Value Domains with Means and Standard Deviations*

	Mean	SD	CPWE	CPOC	BICL	BOLS	IPI	OPI
CPWE	3.64	0.66	1					
CPOC	3.81	0.68	.71**	1				
BICL	4.29	0.48	.32**	.32**	1			
BOLS	4.26	0.54	.36**	.56**	.70**	1		
IPI	4.41	0.55	.11	.17	.73**	.64**	1	
OPI	4.31	0.63	.35**	.52**	.61**	.80**	.70**	1

Note. IPI = Improving Individuals Performance; OPI = Improving Organizational Performance; BICL = Building Individuals' Competencies through Learning Process; BOLS = Building Supportive Organizational Learning System; CPOC = Creating Positive Organizational Culture; CPWI = Creating Positive Working Environment through Meaningful Work-Motivation

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

A moderate correlation was also identified between the work environment-related values and the learning process-related values (Creating Positive Working Environment through Meaningful Work-Motivation and Building Individuals' Competencies through Learning Process, $r = .32$, $p < .001$; Creating Positive Working Environment through Meaningful Work-Motivation and Building Supportive Organizational Learning System, $r = .36$, $p < .001$; Creating Positive Organizational Culture and Building Individuals' Competencies through Learning Process, $r = .32$, $p < .001$; Creating Positive Organizational Culture and Building Supportive Organizational Learning System, $r = .56$, $p < .001$). In general, the correlations between the learning process-related values and performance-related values were found as more significant associations at both individual and organizational levels. Even though the overall correlations among the six value domains were significantly associated with one another, two of the relations between individuals' performance-related and two of the work environment-related values were not found to be significant at the level of .001 or even at the level of .05.

Table 3: *The Results of t-test for Comparison the Rank of Value Priorities by Three Variables*

	Gender (n = 51/55)				Years of Experience (n = 52/54)				Occupations (n = 71/35)			
	Male		Female		≥ 3 Yrs		≤ 3 Yrs		HRD		Others	
	M	M	d**	t	M	M	d	t	M	M	d	t
IPI	4.52	4.31	-0.21	2.01*	4.33	4.49	-0.58	1.48	4.42	4.38	0.04	.38
BICL	4.44	4.15	-0.30	3.36*	4.24	4.34	-0.98	1.00	4.32	4.23	0.09	.74
OPI	4.33	4.29	-0.03	.26	4.28	4.33	-0.05	.38	4.31	4.31	-0.01	.06
BOLS	4.27	4.29	0.16	.14	4.27	4.30	-0.27	.24	4.31	4.23	0.08	.68
CPOC	3.77	3.84	0.64	.48	3.96	3.66	0.30	2.31*	3.78	3.86	-0.08	.48
CPWE	3.63	3.65	0.24	.18	3.73	3.56	0.17	1.29	3.59	3.75	-0.16	1.20

Note. IPI = Improving Individuals Performance; OPI = Improving Organizational Performance; BICL = Building Individuals' Competencies through Learning Process; BOLS = Building Supportive Organizational Learning System; CPOC = Creating Positive Organizational Culture; CPWI = Creating Positive Working Environment through Meaningful Work-Motivation.

Others include HRM, OD, and CD occupations.

* $p < .05$; ** represents the mean differences

In order to compare the mean difference for three variables (see table 3), including gender, years of experience, and task occupation, t-tests were conducted. The results of the t-tests investigating the value-perception priority by gender, years of experience, and occupations are shown in Table 3. From a broader perspective, significant rank order changes were not found across respondents' demographic differences. More importantly, the results represent that there are no significant differences between overall value priorities across all respondents and specific demographic variables. In terms of the priority-ranking orders, significant differences were not even found based on the respondents' demographic variables, overall HR-related, except for HRD practitioners. Practitioners who have more than 3 years of field experience perceived the improving organizational performance value more important than the individuals' learning process-related value. However, regardless of the different respondents' demographic differences, work environment-related values were perceived as less important values than any other learning process- and performance-related values in both individual and organizational levels.

Conclusions

The findings of the two primary research aims were defined according to several analyses. On the one hand, the applicability of the original value-perception matrix was positively validated in the Korean WLP context according to the overall comparison of the results between the current research and previous studies based on the scale reliability test and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient analysis. The scale reliability ranged from .75 to .88, and this result is an acceptable alpha coefficient range. The correlation results among the six-value domains illustrate that (a) the overall correlation coefficient for the six-value matrix was significant, and (b) especially each two value (environmental values, $r = .71$; learning process values, $r = .70$; and performance values, $r = .70$) under two different organizational and individual levels have more powerfully significant correlations among other values of the HRD six-value matrix. On the other hand, the initial index of Korean HRD value-perception was identified based on several descriptive analyses for mean comparisons among three different demographic independent variables. More than 55% of the Korean HRD practitioners perceived the improving individuals' performance ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.55$) and building supportive organizational learning system ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.54$) values as the most important values to guide the WLP practices.

From a broader perspective, several critical conclusions might be drawn from the current research. First, the HRD practitioners perceived the learning and performance values as more valuable than environmental-associated values across overall individuals. These results represent a paradigm shift of HRD practice to the performance-based HRD practice for the organizational performance improvement through learning process (Swanson, 1995, 1998; Svetoslav & Piet, 2002; Steinburg, 1992, Yoo, 1998). In more detail, even though the values of the learning process at both individual and organizational levels are perceived as significantly important values, the providing positive work-related environment values were considered less important by overall individual HRD practitioners. These results might be drawn from the Korean organizational culture in terms of the hierarchical structure of organizations and high-demand of commitment to organization. (Gong, 1998; Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997; Stijn, 2004). More seriously, since the severe economic crisis in 1998, Korean business organizations have been restructured and downsized, focusing more on the performance-oriented paradigm.

Recommendations and Contributions to HRD

To date, several efforts have been made to identify the roles and competencies of HRD practitioners or to verify the relations between HRD practice and performance improvement. The research, however, may be limited in understanding or measuring the values of HRD practices and practitioners. More importantly, in the Korean context, HRD value-related research has not been conducted; thus, the current research might be the initial attempt to measure and describe the value-perceptions of HRD practices and to examine differences in value-priorities across HR-related professionals. Though the results of the current research might not be acceptable for describing the general trends of Korean HRD practices, at least two major impacts can be drawn from this research. First, this research addresses the somewhat weak awareness by overall HRD practitioners of the critical value-perception of the environmental values. In contrast, the literature indicates the importance of motivation and workplace environment regarding the individual and organizational performance improvement in terms of HRD return on investment. Second, according to the current research results, Korean HRD practitioners would understand and identify what they should do for the effective HRD practices for both individuals and organizations in terms of their resonance practices as HRD professionals.

This research is the first attempt to measure and address the overall HRD value-perception in the Korean context. It is perhaps true that this research presents several controversial issues, and it might not be easy to generalize these results as clearly represented Korean trends in terms of the small sample size. Currently, other scholars are developing instruments that have been modified and applied to Korean HRD practices, and those instruments might have several risks for application in the different culture and different organizational structure even though the validation process was positive. In future research, through a critical validation process, the development of a Korean version of the HRD value-matrix would be needed, and this effort would be a valuable contribution for measuring and describing a more reliable HRD value-matrix in the Korean context.

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