Do Practitioners Use HRD Research (and Why or Why Not)?

Jeffrey M. Keefer
New York University

Sophia Stone
North Carolina State University

The research to practice gap within HRD is increasingly important as a focus of research. This study seeks to expand on the findings from a pilot study presented at the 2006 AHRD International Conference by empirically investigating this gap from the perspective of practitioners who are directly asked about their use of research. Results indicate scholarly research is not reaching practitioners, who instead turn to their own communities of practice to meet their research needs.

Keywords: Research to Practice, HRD research, HRD practitioners

The commentary that a research to practice gap exists within human resource development (HRD), and suggestions for how to narrow the gap, has generated much discussion in the literature and at recent AHRD conferences (Short, 2006a, 2006b; Short, Keefer, & Stone, 2006). The gap concerns practitioners and academics alike, and presents unique challenges for HRD practitioners and researchers to link research to practice. A myriad of reasons have been suggested for the gap, including the broad and multidisciplinary nature of the HRD field (Swanson & Holton, 2001), the lack of a prerequisite discipline for entry into the HRD profession (Bartlett, 2003; Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003) and the separateness that HRD experiences in the organization as a result of practitioners' lack of grounding in HRD research and theory (Ruona, Lynham, & Chermack, 2003). The result is a profession whose research findings are dispersed across a myriad of academic journals, not easily accessible to practitioners, who lack a cohesive literature base to establish a research-informed practice relevant to their work setting. Thus, practitioners turn to practitioner journals, such as *T&D* and *Performance Improvement*, and to practitioner based handbooks, such as the ASTD handbooks, not to the academic journals (Bassi, 1998). This presents missed opportunities for researchers and practitioners to inform one other and therefore strengthen the field (Short, Bing, & Kehrhahn, 2003; Swanson & Holton, 2001; Yorks, 2005a).

Problem Statement

Although the HRD literature points to possible reasons for this suggested gap between research and practice, to date, no research has concluded that such a gap exists or what variables may be causing the gap. There is some limited evidence that a research to practice gap is causing problems for practitioners and scholars; with commentary that there appears to be a separation between HRD research and practice from problem-based organizational concerns (Short, Bing, & Kehrhahn, 2003), that HRD practice is not grounded in scientific research (Holton, 2004), and that practitioners are not basing their work interventions on scholarly or scientific foundations (Swanson & Holton, 2001).

To examine the credibility of the perception that research may not inform practice, a pilot study of three practitioners was undertaken in Fall 2005 and the results presented at the 2006 AHRD International Conference (Stone, Keefer, & Hatcher, 2006). The pilot study helped us explore practitioners' use of research, and the researchers were able to draw some very preliminary conclusions suggesting that research does not directly impact practice and is of limited value to practitioners. The results demonstrated that further investigation would be useful to move the profession forward and the study was expanded to include practitioners from a variety of professional areas, industries, and geographic regions around the United States. This is the first full study the authors are aware of that seeks input directly from the practitioner about the perception of the usefulness of the HRD research.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this research stems from the Communities of Practice literature. Communities of practice are groups of people bound together by shared expertise and a passion for a joint enterprise (Wenger &

Snyder, 2000). Wenger defines them as "a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better" (Wenger, 1998, p. 226). Wenger believed that learning is fundamentally experiential and social, and learners that are engaged members of learning communities gain the most value for their intentions (Wenger, 1998). There are three fundamental elements in communities of practice: (1) a domain of knowledge, (2) a community of people who care about that knowledge, and (3) shared practice to develop and be effective in that knowledge (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). This literature is used as the theoretical foundation of the present study because there appears to be a chasm between scholars and practitioners. Reaching out for research within the wider context of the profession to help solve more local and proximate work challenges and the negotiation of meaning that is involved in this process (Wenger, 1998) stems from the needs of those professionals about whom this study seeks to learn. Research may be the catalyst that brings scholars and practitioners together to create a more cohesive community of practice.

Background and Significance

The HRD profession lacks an agreed upon and common path with a core set of educational processes and theories. The inability to understand the formal literature may challenge the practitioner's credibility from a more academic and scholarly perspective. It is no wonder that many claim our field is increasingly fragmented and lacking a shared theoretical vision (Mabey, 2003; Ruona, Lynham, & Chermack, 2003). In turn, this continues the spiral toward lack of definition, credibility, and identity. If there were greater professional emphasis to clearly define the HRD field while equipping practitioners with skills and knowledge to base their work on sound evidence, the gap between research and practice may narrow while organizational credibility may be enhanced.

The purpose of this study is to expand upon the pilot research that was done by expanding the study to a larger and more diverse group of practitioners (Stone, Keefer, & Hatcher, 2006). Pilot studies help us understand aspects of the research design, which can then take the initial results and combine them into the larger study (Robson, 2002). While these pilot studies for interviews help create "safe and stimulating interactions" (Kvale, 1996, p. 147), they are meant only as an initial step toward this, the full study.

Literature Review

A review of the literature documents several reasons for the suggested gap between research and practice; however, there is limited research on practitioners' perceptions of the gap in regards to their use of the research in their day-to-day practice. Explanations for the research to practice gap range from practitioner preparation to organizational constraints (Bartlett, 2003; Bassi, 1998; Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003; Ruona, Lynham, & Chermack, 2003; Swanson & Holton, 2001). The HRD field is without a standard set of competencies and qualifications required to consider oneself an HRD practitioner. Some practitioners enter the field without any discipline-based training at all (Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003). Often, these practitioners "fall" into the training profession. They are viewed as being good in their practice area, so they are requested by their organizations to train others and share their expertise (Bartlett). These practitioners often turn to practitioner-oriented journals and handbooks, rather than to the scholarly research. This presents challenges for HRD practitioners and researchers to link research to practice (Bartlett, 2003).

The lack of a standard set of competencies for practitioner preparation and entry into the field means that HRD practitioners may enter the field from a variety of disciplines, such as human resource management, adult education, and technical occupations, with a foundation in the research base that informs their own discipline (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Although fields such as instructional design, organizational development, and management contribute to the practice of HRD, they are not a standard prerequisite for entry into the profession (Bartlett, 2003). HRD is, as Kuchinke (2001) asserts, "cross-disciplinary" in nature (p. 292). The competencies that do exist, such as those in SHRM's PHR/SPHR, ASTD's CPLP or HPI, or those of ibstpi, do not fully represent the field of HRD.

Thus, HRD practitioners may lack a solid foundation in the theory that informs the field, carrying implications for the gap between research and practice (Bing, Kehrhahn, & Short, 2003). Holton (2004) has argued that HRD practice is not grounded in scientific research. The diversity of the field carries implications for organizational roles as well. The HRD professional's role can span many functional areas in an organization, and practitioners' work roles may not be located in a specific HRD functional area (Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003; Johnston, 2001). This further serves to widen the gap between research and practice.

Other reasons for the gap concern organizational constraints and demands on the practitioner. There is a perception that research is dated, not solution-driven, and lacking best practices information (Kuchinke, 2004). According to Kuchinke, practitioners are not rewarded for using theory, and researchers are not rewarded for directly addressing practitioners. Organizations do not always value research—a bottom-line, performance-driven culture looks for short-term, immediate solutions. The "quick fix" solution pattern of practice serves to further distance practitioners from the research (Bassi, 1998; Kezar & Eckel, 2000; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001; Short, Bing, & Kehrhahn, 2003). Practitioners often do not have the time or the resources to investigate research findings (Bassi, 1998). Thus, research is perceived as valuable only if it supports the organization's bottom line.

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study is to examine the suggested gap between research and practice and determine from the practitioners' perspective whether a gap does or does not exist. Previously, an exploratory pilot case study with three practitioners was conducted because no similar research was located and trustworthiness of the research questions had not been established. The results of the pilot study were reported at the AHRD 2006 International Conference (Stone, Keefer, & Hatcher, 2006). This study has been expanded to a full study of 13 practitioners.

The research question guiding this inquiry is *Do practitioners use HRD-related research—why or why not*? The semi-structured interview is framed by the following five questions:

1. Could you tell me about your work experience, including number of years of experience, position title, and type of organization you work at?
2. Do you use the HRD research?
3. If yes, how do you use the research?
4. If no, why not?
5. What needs do you have that are currently not being met by research?

The interview questions were exploratory in nature. As with the pilot study, the questions were adjusted based on the appropriateness and fittingness of the interviewee's knowledge and understanding of them (Robson, 2002). For example, for question 2, "Do you use the HRD research," it was necessary to explain the meaning of the term *HRD* to some participants who were not aware that it meant human resource development. The researchers were guided by two definitions of HRD: (1) HRD is "both an organizational role and a field of professional practice. The fundamental purpose of HRD is to contribute to both long-term strategic performance and more immediate performance improvement through ensuring that organizational members have access to resources for developing their capacity for performance and for making meaning of their experience in context of the organization's strategic needs and the requirements of their jobs" (Yorks, 2005b, pp. 20-21) and (2) "HRD is a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance" (Swanson & Holton, 2001, p. 4). Since the questions were tested in the pilot, the researchers learned that acronyms, concepts, and terms that may be clear to researchers may not be clear to practitioners; these definitions were for clarification if needed (Kvale, 1996). One term that was left ambiguous is the term "research," which resulted in significant findings discussed later in the Results and Findings.

Method

Research Approach and Philosophy

Qualitative research offers the researcher the opportunity to explore participants' values, beliefs, and perspectives from the participant's vantage point (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In qualitative research, "The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). We chose a qualitative research approach with case study methodology because this offers flexibility and spontaneity. For example, as qualitative researchers, we were able to collect data using a semistructured interview, with predetermined questions (Robson, 2002) yet still with "an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The flexibility in the research design is in keeping with a goal of qualitative research, which is to generate explanatory theory and to create understanding. The research process allows for the emergence of relational concepts and patterns, so the process is both interpretative as well as inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The flexibility in the research design is in keeping with a goal of qualitative research, which is to generate explanatory theory and to create understanding.

Case Study Design

This study is a qualitative case study design that is exploratory in nature. The phenomenon under investigation is HRD practitioners' perceptions about the usefulness of HRD research. The case studies practitioners within an HRD professional context. Case study methodology was used in this research, as the authors wanted to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Furthermore, the researchers believed there would be "many more variables of interest than data point . . . with multiple sources of evidence" (Yin, 2003, pp. 13-14). As such, a multiple-case design was used to further explore the phenomenon and investigate whether any common conclusions could be drawn (Yin, 2003). Stake describes this as a collective case study, where individual cases "may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic . . . they are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps even theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2003, p. 138).

While the design was case study, the method of inquiry used was ethnography. As Creswell defines ethnography as "a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58), it is fitting that the researchers study an element of a professional culture of practice about which they are most familiar (Tedlock, 2003). It is the very community of practice itself, exhibited through the theories of social structure and situated experience (Wenger, 1998), that the researchers investigated in the interviewed population.

Pilot Study and Full Study

This study is comprised of two components, the first being the pilot study of three practitioners, and the second being the full study with ten additional training and development practitioners interviewed in November 2005. A pilot study, whose focus was to determine if the questions and format was suitable for the project, was undertaken with the interview of three practitioners. These interviews were conducted over a four-day period in September of 2005, two via telephone and one in-person, with all responses hand-recorded. The full study consisted of 13 people in total, with interviews conducted during November 2005. This paper is a report of the full study.

Sample and Data Collection Process

The pilot utilized a convenience sample—the three practitioners were known to the researchers. For the full study, participants were selected according to purposive sampling criteria to avoid bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants were identified by directly contacting over 100 professional colleagues, some known to the researchers, and some unknown, from the American Society for Training and Development and the Academy of Human Resource Development via email. Some of those colleagues in turn suggested additional possible participants, so using snowballing to access this difficult-to-reach population, they were contacted as well (Robson, 2002). The researchers then selected possible interviewees from those contacted based on title (for a desired representative sample of T&D positions, ranging from instructional designer to training director), industry (for a variety of industries), and location (for a geographically dispersed sample). The 13 people willing to be interviewed were all educated in the United States and worked in various capacities, industries, and regions. Individuals were selected from various industries and various parts of the country to ensure this phenomenon was not context specific (occurring within a specific professional context or industry). This particular sample was chosen because they represented the diversity of the HRD field, with none of the interviewees holding the same title or working in the same organization, or even the same part of the United States. The researchers wanted a variety of backgrounds, positions, and industry type (private sector, non-profit sector, and self-employed). The researchers made no attempt to seek out an even distribution of males and females, nor did they intentionally seek a population located only within the United States. Table 1 contains a profile of these participants.

Practitioners were required to have at least three years' experience in the training and development field and be currently employed, either in an organization or self-employed. The researchers made the assumption that practitioners with a minimum of three years of experience would have had the opportunity for exposure to the HRD research in the workplace. This was based on the researchers' own personal, qualitative experience with the earlier pilot study where these assumptions were tested and found that even practitioners with several years experience were not using the academic research (Stone, Keefer, & Hatcher, 2006).

Measures

The five questions that were selected were intended to be straightforward and clear, with all attempts to be non-threatening while listening to the responses of the interviewees (Robson, 2002). The decision of where to conduct the interview is an important one. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that the researcher carefully consider the rational for why a specific setting is appropriate for the conduct of the study, considering what characteristics are particularly unique and compelling that will inform the study. Interviews were conducted via telephone, in one sitting, with a duration of 30 – 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted via telephone since the researchers interviewed individuals from around the country and were not able to travel to those locations. Participants therefore had the benefit of remaining in their work setting to speak if they so chose, and were able to reference work related resources used in practice throughout the interview. Responses were hand-recorded by the interviewers, with quotes taken when the interviewee stated something that seemed significant or important. The quotes and interview notes

Table 1. *Profile* of Study Participants

Participant	Title or Position	Industry	Region	Yrs. Exp.	Background
1	Training Director for Higher Education Services	government state agency	Northeast	10	behavioral sciences (bachelors)
2	Senior Training Officer	government state agency	West	18	industrial education (bachelors)
3	Training Manager	national restaurant corporation	Midwest	5	food science (bs), current ms hrd student
4	Consultant to banking industry	self-employed	South	16	finance and accounting (bachelors)
5	Training Director	state university	Midwest	not disclosed	records information systems mgt (bachelors); mba; doctoral candidate
6	Senior IT support analyst	non profit financial institution	Northeast	10	business education
7	Instructional Design Specialist	healthcare	Northeast	15	instructional development (masters)
8	Training Manager learning and development	corporation	West	10	education (bachelors) management (master's)
9	OD Consultant	self-employed	West	35	not disclosed
10	Instructional designer	corporation	Midwest	4	marketing (bachelors)
11	Instructional designer	corporate	Southeast	22	current doctoral student in education
12	Educational Services Director	healthcare	South	11	industrial/organizational psychology (master's)
13	Assistant Director	pharmaceutical	South	not disclosed	bs, industrial management; med t&d; doctoral student in t&d

were then read back to the interviewee for member checking to confirm trustworthiness (Robson, 2002). The results were then hand-coded by the researchers. Three of the transcripts were later sent to those three interviewees for member review to confirm the trustworthiness of the data. Interviewees were sent copies of the approved institutional review board approval form before the interviews, and each one was verbally reviewed with the interviewees at the beginning of the phone calls for clarity and verbal agreement (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researchers explained the process of the interviews and told them that they were free to not answer any question or stop the interview and participation at any time. Furthermore, they were told their names and confidentiality would be guarded, and ethical guidelines would be strictly enforced on behalf of the researchers within their roles as researchers (Kvale, 1996).

Limitations

Limitations include not defining the terms used in the interview (some interviewees were not familiar with the acronym AHRD); the prior familiarity of the interviewees by the researchers, the use of a convenience sample for the pilot study; the hand recording of the data; and the researcher's own subjectivity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As qualitative researchers, we bring our own inherent belief/value system to our research, and we must examine our own personal and professional bias(es) throughout the process. Having conducted a pilot study, we had to keep our own assumptions in check. One way we guarded against this was the use of purposeful sampling for the full study.

Data Analysis Procedures

The procedures followed for data analysis are based on the Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Miles and Huberman (1994) frameworks for coding. The analysis of the qualitative data began with the identification of key themes and patterns that emerged upon our readings of the transcripts. As with the pilot study, the coding process was an inductive one that involved creating meaningful categories of data, assigning descriptive codes with a summarizing notation to the data in the transcript and identifying emergent themes and patterns using the third level of codes, pattern codes, which is more inferential and explanatory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The codes were at different levels of analysis, from the descriptive to the inferential. The first step involved transcribing the hand-written notes. The first pass through was an open coding process, followed by axial coding, where categories are related to their sub-categories and these relationships are tested against data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The codes are attached to "chunks" of varying size sentences or phrases, identified as the response, by question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transcripts were combined into one large document, paginated and notated by letter headers A and B, and each code was referenced to the appropriate pagination mark. Each interviewer did an initial first coding of his own transcript, and read one another's transcripts. The interviewers scheduled a phone call discussion to review first level coding of our own transcripts. Then each reviewer reviewed the coding of the other's transcript and made changes if necessary if new categories of data emerged. We then scheduled a second phone call to review second level coding (categories emerged) and finally a third conversation to discuss emergent themes. The researchers then met two additional times to discuss themes over the telephone. Each interviewer then read and re-read the total transcripts over the span of a week. At each reading we made reflective notes, identified emerging themes, and then cross-checked with one another to identifying overlapping themes.

During the coding process we checked against our own subjectivity. We intentionally tried to not influence what the interviewee was saying. While we were under the initial assumption that what we found in the pilot study was accurate, we were still hoping we could be wrong so we gave the practitioners ample opportunity to explain. Also, by coding our transcripts independently, we further guarded against bias.

Results and Findings

Results of the full study reveal practitioners are not accessing the scholarly research; rather, they are conducting research, as they define it, by turning to their own community of practice: colleagues, professional associations, practitioner oriented publications and websites, practitioner based conferences, meetings, and other resources both internal and external to their organizations. Our findings indicate that for these practitioners, the scholarly research does not inform their practice. Practitioners' perceptions about the research not meeting their needs is evident in a variety of professional positions, at all levels, and in many industries, according to this participant sample. Practitioner perceptions of the usefulness of the HRD research revealed the following:

(1) There is a difference in understanding of the meaning of the term "research." As researchers, we think of research as academic peer reviewed journals, but from the practitioners' perspective, research is something they actively engage in. For example, when a practitioner is researching best practices or ROI, they consider research an activity-- to seek out best practices of what other organizations are doing. A practitioner explains: I inform my work by a combination of things—by people fairly well known in T&D, I check in with them, I use the web, I'm also a member of the [state] Training Council and we get together in monthly meetings, we sponsor special events, small conferences . . . and . . . occasionally I'll start a book but I tend not to finish it—books are ok, sometimes with a book I'm just looking for an idea, or just looking for a specific area to get information that I'm interested in, my interest isn't in the whole book (personal communication, November 4, 2005). Practitioners seek research rooted in practice; practitioners are solution-driven in their search for research. When asked about the academic research, one practitioner explains: The research is relevant, it's just not accessible. There are time constraints—it's taboo to put on your timesheet you're doing research. They want a product produced, whether you're on the platform…they don't see research as a product that adds value (personal communication, November 4, 2005). Practitioner-based resources are seen as timely, accessible, and offering best practice information.

(2) Research must solve specific practice based problems. It is this action-oriented process, the very seeking out of practice-based, solution-driven information, that practitioners are calling "research." Practitioners told us: "Usually what gets me to do research is someone asking me to solve a specific problem" and "To design training well you have to go with measurable objectives" (personal communication, November 10, 2005). These practitioners are actively seeking out resources in their communities of practice to solve their work related problems. Although we think of research as a body of peer reviewed, scholarly literature, for these practitioners research is active engagement in their community of practice via professional associations, conferences, colleague interactions, practice-based literature, best-selling books by noted authors, and meetings.

(3) Practitioner-based research is meeting these practitioners' needs. Because their needs are rooted within their day-to-day work, they turn to the practice literature for benchmarks and best practices information. These practitioners are resourceful—turning to a host of internal and external resources to meet their organization's needs. A practitioner explained she found her organization best served by stating there is "research on this" or "benchmarking with experts in the field being interviewed, or spoken to." The gap with ASTD is that their research is not readily available. Her client group expects that gap to be filled (personal communication, November 3, 2005).

(4) The research is not easily accessible because it is not problem-based or solution-driven. Research, according to these practitioners, is not rooted in problems of practice, therefore they see the language as too academic, or "artificial"; it is not "practitioner friendly language." A practitioner told us: "What I tend to run into more is the language is sometimes cumbersome—it's not always written for the practitioner—it's written to be accepted to a specific peer review journal…. I can give you an example. In the field of OD—there are a lot of words you can use that go along with that field but when you talk to a client or customer you can't always use words they won't understand. (personal communication, November 7, 2005). Another practitioner told us the operating model at her job is one of producing, so "there is very little time allocated for research or filling in missing information or

building skills." This practitioner was unaware much of the HRD research even existed (personal communication, November 15, 2005). Our findings tell us practitioners are not going to the academic databases to access the HRD research, because they do not think of academic research as beneficial for their practice.

(5) Difficulty with the term HRD, but whose difficulty is it? HRD appears to be a problematic term that is understood in different ways. For example, when one practitioner was asked if she was familiar with HRD, she stated "only at a very high level, but did not know much about it until [the researcher and interviewer] emailed her asking to interview her here." She then stated she never heard the term "HRD" before (personal communication, November 7, 2005). Another practitioner told us she remembered the topic or term from graduate school, but does not use the term when discussing with her "research triangle:" HR, training, and instructional design. In her region, SHRM [Society for Human Resource Management] and ASTD are very isolated (personal communication, November 12, 2005). Although HRD practitioners have difficulty with the term HRD, this may be unrelated to what they understand about research. Regardless of whether they understood what HRD is, they all agreed that they understood research as an action to solve the problems of practice.

(6) Organizations value practitioner-based research. From the practitioner's perspective, their organizations appear to have in common a value for benchmarking and best practices literature. The academic research does not address the problems of practice. One practitioner responded that "no one at her organization cares," and she "just needs to get the work done." There is no motivation to read or follow research. She stated, "If I will not apply anything I learn, what is the point?" (personal communication, November 12, 2005).

7) The academic language of the research is problematic. We discovered that practitioners perceived the language of research as difficult; they find it unrelated to their problems of practice, and they find it cumbersome and inaccessible. One practitioner said: "I don't see the value, personally. Part of it is—when I say academic, it's theoretical, the situation seems strained, artificial, how they use the language, what is going on, it has to be more real to me. It has to have some meaning for how I see the world, how I perceive it, it's not how I see it day to day. It appears to me that "academics are writing for academics" (personal communication, November 4, 2005).

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Significance to HRD

Researchers and practitioners both acknowledge the importance of research, and both communities of practice use research in their own way and for their own needs. Practitioners appear to need research for their own problems of practice, and while there is evidence that the *process* of locating this research and *best practices* themselves can be known as *research*, the term seems slippery and contextually based in and around practice. As researchers, our own common understanding evokes peer review, but the practitioners we interviewed have a different perception of its meaning, one that is more in-line with their own communities of practice with knowledge domains, the community that cares for that knowledge, and the shared practice developing and being more effective with it (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The peer reviewed HRD research is not being used by practitioners because it is not problem based, and thus not accessible or useful to them. This seems to imply that academic research is not reaching, and therefore not affecting, practice. More research in this area is needed, especially to learn about how researchers could structure research projects that would inform problems of practice, whether communities of practice can comprise of both researchers and practitioners, and whether scholarly researchers want to reach practitioners at all.

By extending the pilot study, the authors learned that some of the initial findings were not understood in the same way as after conducting the larger study. That is part of the research process, and indeed extending the study as reported in this paper demonstrates the value and need exists for us to learn more about practitioners in our field and how researchers can work together with them. As researchers, we began our careers in practice, but only after academically investigating the phenomenon did we begin to understand the unspoken-until-asked-for perceptions of practice. These findings are particularly valuable for researchers who teach in programs that educate practitioners, as a problem-focused research is what is of greatest use and interest to their students, and perhaps the field itself.

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