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Experience: A Questionable Teacher

Editorials come from experience and are generally triggered by a relatively small life event. Although editorials are opinions and are not necessarily research-based, they do have an important place in research. They can awaken passions within us and help us make commitments to learn more. Often the editorializing of researchers leads to specific research projects or raises new lines of inquiry.

Whereas editorials may be initiated by experience, questioning the value of experience is not new. In my case, the questioning was provoked by the slow service in an Ohio restaurant and fueled by the magic of best friends hungry to catch up on the past several months of their fast-moving lives. An evening with my buddy Gene usually results in brain teasing, brain picking, and soul sharing, and this night was no disappointment. It was clearly Gene's night to be profound and, to ensure that what he was about to say looked profound, Gene leaned back and then arched forward. "One thing I know," he said, "when I was nineteen I used to think that as I grew older I would get better at many of the things I wasn't that good at. Now, I know you only get better at what you want to get better at."

You only get better at what you want to get better at. This is a stimulating observation; to me it was a simple yet profound thought. Over the dinner table, Gene continued to look inward and muse about the inadequacies of the former nineteen-year-old who still exists in his forty-six-year-old body. According to Gene, just experiencing had not been enough to improve his expertise. Nothing of value to him got better or easier through experience alone. He further explained that over the years he got better only at things he wanted to get better at—things he was truly curious about, that he studied, or that he tried to improve. In fact, he claimed he even got worse at some of the things at which he thought he would automatically get better.

Robert Gagne's (1962) classic work on military training also plays down the teaching value of experience. Gagne observed that practice in itself did not result in improvement, much less perfection. But here we are, the human resource development (HRD) profession, in a field of practice—experiences—that we are very proud of. Our years of experience alone have taken us about as far as we can go. Without seriously studying and reflecting on our profession and without developing sound theories to explain and challenge our practice, we will continue to repeat our experiences without learning from them. Currently, HRD personnel con-

tinue to rely on trial-and-error methods of managing, designing, delivering, and evaluating HRD efforts.

***HRDQ* to the Rescue**

It would be presumptuous to declare that *Human Resource Development Quarterly (HRDQ)* has come to the rescue, but it is reasonable to declare that the scholarly readiness of the profession and the organizations in which it operates make *HRDQ* possible.

Many of us see *HRDQ* as the start of a community of HRD scholars. I believe this research quarterly will provide the intellectual footing and research credibility HRD requires to mature as a field of study and practice. The scholarly community is very clear about the importance of research journals and of the traditional scholarly review process for manuscripts. The HRD field has not yet enjoyed the full benefits of sound research or the cumulative power of research applied to everyday professional practice.

HRD researchers have been trained in other fields of study, and most of them remain securely connected to their root discipline in order to maintain their scholarly credentials. Their best HRD research is often published in journals that rarely reach the thoughtful practitioners and HRD scholars rooted in other disciplines. The interdisciplinary character of HRD has made the profession very eclectic. Although there is a charm to this, the shock comes when we find top HRD practitioners who have no substantive idea of how people learn or how organizations function. This ignorance is not charming.

***HRDQ* Origins, Huzzahs, and Boundaries**

The history of *HRDQ* is lengthy and probably most interesting to those who were its primary players. Briefly, many people over the years have proposed an HRD research journal. The embryonic home of *HRDQ* was the research committee of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and eventually a partnership evolved between the research committee, the Training and Development Research Center of the University of Minnesota, and Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Early champions of *HRDQ* included the chairs of the research committee, David Miller, Ivan Charner, Michael D. Mireau, and Neal E. Chalofsky; ASTD staff Curtis E. Plott, executive vice-president, and Nancy Olson, director of publications; and Jossey-Bass's president, Steven Piersanti. The current champions include Gary N. McLean, associate editor, and Sandra J. Johnson, assistant to the editor, the distinguished editorial board, the scores of expert reviewers, and the corporate sponsors.

The conceptual boundaries of *HRDQ* are very broad and will con-

tinue to be redefined over the years. I have used a simple 2×2 matrix to convey my conceptual view of *HRDQ* (Figure 1). One axis deals with the scope of the inquiry methods that will be embraced by this journal, both quantitative and qualitative. *HRDQ* will not be biased toward one method; I personally believe in the power and potential of both. The second axis of the matrix deals with the scope of the content. Here I divide the HRD content and issues into two conceptual camps, human development and human capital, as the fundamental struggle in the HRD profession is between these two perspectives. I see the human development side coming largely from psychology and education and the human capital side coming from economics and management. To me, and others, human resource development at its best is an integration of the two perspectives (Campbell and Campbell, 1988; Swanson, 1982).

First Issue

As with any new research journal, the first issue is an experiment of sorts. The editorial board has established the following basic structure for each issue:

- Editorial
- Feature, consisting of a feature article (refereed), a reaction article (invited), and a final word by the author of the feature article
- Articles (refereed)
- Reviews of books, computer software, and media

Figure 1. Conceptual Boundaries of *HRDQ*

		<i>Content</i>	
		Human Development	Human Capital
<i>Inquiry Methods</i>	Quantitative Research		
	Qualitative Research		

- Forum (nonrefereed), soliciting opinions from readers in a variety of forms, such as letters to the editor, short essays, and satire, and reactions to specific *HRDQ* entries printed in previous issues.

The editorial board also has been emphatic about the need to hold firmly to the review standards and process. And, as readers might expect, I look forward to a steady flow of high-quality manuscripts.

Our simple goals, in marketing terms, are to look like a research journal and to be inviting to both researchers and thoughtful practitioners. Your counsel on these two goals and on any other dimension of *HRDQ* is welcome. Furthermore, we genuinely need your support in the following specific areas:

- Submission of research manuscripts
- Submission of Review and Forum items
- Individual subscriptions
- Institutional subscriptions
- Acknowledgment of *HRDQ* in conversation and writing.

Well, *HRDQ* is a reality. My hope is that long after I am gone, this journal will be seen as a significant factor in the maturation of a profession that wanted to get better at what it purported to do, decided that experience alone was no longer enough, and committed itself to scholarly inquiry as being crucial to the growth and maturity of HRD.

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EDITOR



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