Chapter 4
Instructional Design in Human Resource Development Academic Programs in the USA

Sunyoung Park
Louisiana State University, USA

Doo Hun Lim
University of Oklahoma, USA

Minkyoung Kim
University of West Florida, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the current status of instructional design courses in human resource development (HRD) graduate programs. The authors examined the curricular content of HRD academic programs in the USA and suggested critical considerations to improve instructional design practices in higher education settings. By reviewing information about 124 institutions with graduate HRD programs, they found that 27 of the institutions (21.8%) offer required and/or elective instructional design courses. In addition, the authors conducted an in-depth review of those 27 institutions to identify the affiliations and features of their HRD programs (college, school, department, program names, degrees, and the existence of online programs). To better understand the instructional design practices in higher education settings, they also discuss three instructional approaches for instructional design, consideration for using technology-mediated instructional design, and instructional design models for learning transfer. Finally, the authors present conclusions and recommendations for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Since human resource development (HRD) is a multidisciplinary field (e.g., Jeung, Yoon, Park, & Jo, 2011; Weinberger, 1998), scholars in the field have discussed how to define and identify the disciplinary and theoretical features of HRD (McGuire & Cseh, 2006). For instance, 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). From a broader perspective, McLean and McLean (2001) viewed HRD as "any process or activity that, either initially or over the long-term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity" (p. 322).

As part of scholarly efforts to identify HRD, numerous researchers have examined the academic programs of HRD to illuminate the role of HRD curriculum to educate students, develop knowledge, build a bridge between academia and practice, and advance the profession (e.g., Cho & Zachmeier, 2015; Kuchinke, 2002; Watkins & Marsick, 2016). In particular, scholars have agreed that HRD academic programs reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the field, promote teaching and learning in HRD, and focus on the need to respond to the demands of different stakeholders to contribute to individual, organizational, and societal development (Kuchinke, 2015; McLagan, 2015; Lim & Rager, 2015).

Although scholars have defined and explored the features of HRD in different ways (McLean & McLean, 2001; McLagan, 1989; Swanson, 1995; Watkins, 1989), learning (training) and performance are central themes in HRD academic programs (Watkins & Marsick, 2016). Specifically, training and development are the core components reflecting the features of HRD (McLagan, 1989). They are important functions of HRD (McGuire & Cseh, 2006), and act as a strategic intervention to solve performance problems and improve performance at the individual and organizational levels (Ruona, 2001). In this regard, instructional design plays a significant role in designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating training, and therefore is a critical task for HRD professionals. In training and development, instructional design has been used as a systematic approach to create effective, efficient, and reliable training/instruction based on scientific methods (Morrison, Ross, Kemp, & Kalman, 2012).

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