Ethics in Publishing

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Ethics in Publishing
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Keywords: Publishing, Publications, Ethics

Ethics has become a critical topic for HRD scholars and practitioners (Aragon & Hatcher, 2001). There are greater numbers of publicized ethical breaches among members of the business community during the past decade than ever before. It has become clear that there is a growing need to re-examine the ethics of specific strategies employed in all kinds of organizations (e.g., business, government, non-profit, education) throughout the world (Wilson, 1993). In fact, it seems that HRD faculty and practitioners are being asked more frequently to develop and implement ethics-related training and organization development interventions to address these concerns. Interestingly, many HRD and business faculty members are comfortable teaching

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ethics in the classroom when it focuses on corporate ethics, but are we (as scholars and educators) appropriately challenging our own ethical practices within the higher educational arena? Although these kinds of questions are likely the most personal and difficult questions we can ask ourselves, we believe that it is time to do just that! We argue that this innovative session can heighten the AHRD membership’s ethical awareness and focus by bringing to light the importance of ethics in one critical area—ethics in publishing.

Through the years we have noticed that the best scholars and educators are those who persistently ask questions that help them continuously improve their practices (e.g., teaching, researching, and consulting). It is through this type of constant inquiry awareness is raised, excellence can be attained, and ethics can be maintained. Ethics in publishing is one that many AHRD members discuss and question informally. This session is designed so that participants can ask the difficult questions that should be asked in an organized forum. This format will help scholars, scholar-practitioners, and graduate students challenge themselves at a personal and professional level. Through this reflective process we can become better researchers and scholars, which will in turn directly and indirectly influence others (e.g., students, colleagues, readers).

Session Purpose

The primary purpose of this innovative session is to provide HRD faculty, administrators, and graduate students the forum to listen to panelists and then discuss current issues and challenges related to the ethical decision-making and behavior of researchers and scholars as it relates to publishing. It will provide attendees the opportunity to challenge behaviors and practices commonly seen and held within this arena. I (Susan R. Madsen) just facilitated a very
successful session at the Academy of Management in Anaheim (August, 2008) on this topic and realized that we need the same conversation (different panelists) in the AHRD. In fact, attendees of this session agreed that this type of open dialogue needs to occur within all academic professional organizations.

This session will be based upon Starratt’s (1994, as cited in Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) theoretical framework, which focuses on ethical decision making from three important perspectives: justice, care, and critique. These three perspectives are part of “The Multidimensional Ethic” model created to consider the influence of quality of life, participation, and definitions of value in making ethical decisions (including those related to writing and publishing).

Session Description and Format

This innovative session will provide participants with a forum to discuss ethical issues of concern within the publishing domain. Four current and past HRD journal editors or associate editors and one book publisher will serve as panelists (see first page for names and institutional affiliations) for this 1-1/2 hour session that will be divided into three primary segments:

1. Segment 1 (30 minutes): The facilitator will briefly highlight reasons for her interest in organizing this session and then introduce the five panelists (journal editors). Each of the panelists will be asked to discuss some of the current issues and trends they have seen related to ethics in publishing (five minutes each). They may also address some commonly asked ethical questions from authors. Topics and issues that may emerge include, but are not limited to, the following:
a. *Authors:* authorship, conflicts of interest, plagiarism/citing, ethical approval, research design, redundant publications, misconduct, accuracy, and personal criticism of others

b. *Reviewers and Editors:* unbiased, speed/timeliness, accuracy, responsibility, objectivity, confidentiality, and conflicts of interest

For example, a few of the related questions that have surfaced through years of work with this topic are as follows:

- When is it ethical for professors to use their students’ research data and then write about it without including the student as a co-author? When is it ethical to “acknowledge” versus “co-author”? When is it ethical for committee chairs to publish with graduate students?
- What are the ethical issues surrounding the use of ghostwriters?
- As misrepresentation and plagiarism are critical issues for professorial research, what standard is appropriate for the citation of the work of others?
- What is intellectual property in terms of scholarship?
- Is a faculty member held responsible for plagiarism in a student’s piece if it is published?
- When there is a breach of ethics—who is ultimately the judge and jury? Is it the Academy, institution, or department?
- Is it ethical of an institution to look the other way when a famous scholar plagiarizes (e.g., Doris Kearns Goodwin at Harvard)?

2. **Segment 2 (20 minutes):** Participants will be asked to gather in small groups (4-6 attendees) to discuss the issues that surfaced from the panelists’ presentations. They
will be encouraged to identify the top three ethical issues or questions their group has for the panelists.

3. **Segment 3 (40 minutes):** Next the groups will be invited to ask questions to the panelists for a highly interactive Q&A session. Panelists will also be encouraged to ask questions to participants as well so the session can remain interactive and interesting. During the last few minutes each presenter will be asked to offer their final advice to participants (one-minute each). At the end of the session, the facilitator will conclude with a few suggestions for next steps. An email list will be circulated for those interested in receiving the notes and ideas from the session and/or continuing the conversation online.

**Conclusion**

This session will not only help support the ethical goals of the AHRD, but it will be an interesting, interactive, and enjoyable session for conference participants to attend. By providing forums for scholarly discussion on academic ethics, we can assist the Academy’s membership in challenging their own choices and behaviors. This type of self-reflection can often lead to a deeper commitment of AHRD members toward personal and professional integrity.

**Bibliography**


