
ARTICLES

Managers as Knowledge Generators: The Nature of Practitioner-Scholar Research in the Nonprofit Sector

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As nonprofit management education develops, it has the opportunity to consider new premises concerning managers' roles. In the design and practice of traditional management education, managers are assumed to be the ultimate users of knowledge. Less attention is given to educating managers to be knowledge generators who combine intimate understanding of issues, problems, and settings with established theory and methods. Based on a discussion of three research projects undertaken in nonprofit settings by participants in a doctoral program for advanced practitioners at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, we describe seven dimensions of practitioner-scholar inquiry. The pattern of practitioner-scholar research that emerges from these research projects is contrasted with two other modes of knowledge production. Implications for practitioner-scholar inquiry and for the education of practitioner-scholars in the nonprofit sector are discussed.

NONPROFIT STUDIES as a field worthy of academic pursuit has been sufficiently successful that we now recognize a divide in the sector between academic knowledge and practical knowledge. The importance of spanning this divide was symbolized by the publication of a special issue of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* devoted to illuminating and framing the scholar-practice question. There, Feeney (2000) outlined a number of the sources, challenges, and potential responses related to the theory-practice gap and called for a repositioning of the scholar-practice debate. Much prior discussion in the field of management studies casts the problem as one of translating and disseminating academically produced

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research in a fashion that is accessible to practicing managers. This definition assumes that academic knowledge generated by academics for dissemination to practitioners is relevant and potentially usable. The special issue repositioned the debate in a constructive fashion to involve the coproduction of knowledge, achieved through research collaborations between academics and practitioners. Such collaboration opens the possibility for practitioners to significantly influence the framing of research and to identify actionable knowledge of practical relevance.

A complementary approach is suggested by Van Til's use (2000) of the term *pracademic*. Pracademicians are boundary spanners whose personal histories place them in both the academy and the world of practice. Spanning the divide need not be left to individuals who reside in distinct and somewhat antagonistic intellectual communities. Rather, a special group of practitioner-scholars can meld the expertise and understandings of these two communities.

In recent years, a number of alternative doctoral programs in the United States and Europe have been devoted to the development of practitioner-scholars. Among these is the Executive Doctor in Management (E.D.M.) Program of the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. Members of its program faculty have been collaborating with the Mandel Center for Non-profit Organizations to provide opportunities for individuals with substantial nonprofit experience to develop and apply scholarly skills to problems of the sector in the context of their doctoral education. The intent is to produce knowledge with a potent combination of rigor, relevance, and accessibility. These advanced professionals can be seen not only as consumers but also as generators of knowledge. For creating practical knowledge, their substantial experience provides them with a comparative advantage over traditional discipline-based academic training.

Faculty experience with this program indicates the need to define a practice-centered scholarship and to identify its intents and characteristic features. To that end, this article is addressed to non-profit managers who seek to understand characteristics of practice—relevant, research-generated knowledge—to advanced practitioners who either are or wish to become practitioner-scholars and to management academics interested in educating practitioner-scholars.

Milofsky (2000) has discussed problems of framing and carrying out research that is meaningful and relevant to professionals in practice, proposing a process of transparent ethnography. In a similar vein, based on several years of experience guiding research performed by practitioner-scholars in the E.D.M. Program, we propose here particular features of a practitioner scholarship that spans theory and practice and aims to produce knowledge that is not simply deemed usable by the producer but is actually used in practice. The features of this scholarship rest on the premise that practicing managers can be generators of knowledge. Rather than being seen as

applying knowledge that is produced by others, managers are viewed as theorists in their own right, having their own abstract and complex understandings of their circumstances and acting on the basis of more or less shared systems of meaning in groups, organizations, and societies.

The Interplay of Practice and Theory

The prior work experience of students in management programs plays a significant role in the goals and impact of management education. For individuals with little or no management experience, formal education introduces concepts, practice, situations, and analytical techniques. In contrast, experienced managers enter educational settings with considerable, albeit tacit, knowledge. For them, learning involves expanding their personal knowledge through exposure, orally and in writing, to others' ideas and experiences. Education helps them evaluate and extend personal knowledge through systematic, formally organized, and more abstract and complex ideas. When such managers study in alternative doctoral programs, they are expected to become practitioner-scholars who engage in field research and generate relevant, actionable knowledge for others as well as themselves.

Considerable attention has been given to how managers learn. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984), involving reiterative stages of action, experience, reflection, and conceptualization, is widely used in management education. Argyris and Schön (1978) propose an action theory of practice that identifies second-order learning, or learning how to learn, as a focal skill, and Schön (1995) advances the idea of practitioner learning through reflection. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Lave (1993) understand learning as situated practice. Each of these perspectives finds managerial learning far removed from formal academic settings, although educational designs surely benefit from using these ideas.

Two dominant perspectives exist about the relationship between theory and practice. One view finds positive benefits from theory-practice interaction. For example, Kuhnian-scale revisions of theory result from an accumulation of anomalies pertaining to extant theory (Kuhn, 1970). Practitioners for whom existing concepts are inadequate may be one source of anomaly, driving the inquiry to deeper questioning of foundational knowledge and contributing to theory revision or a paradigm shift. A common source of theory building in management occurs when theorists simply go into the field to observe and conceptualize advanced practice. Concepts of lean production (Womack and Roos, 1991), for example, appear to have been created through such an inductive process. Thus, practice inspires theory.

Conversely, theory can inspire practice. Notable transfers of theory to practice resulted when theoretical developments in game theory

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influenced nuclear arms policy in the post–World War II era. Coase’s conceptualization of the problem of social cost (1960) has influenced structures of public regulation in the United States, and corporate finance theories, such as Sharpe’s capital asset pricing model (1964) and the Black-Scholes options pricing model (Black and Scholes, 1973), revolutionized financial practice in the business sector through the number and complexity of financial instruments. Theory and practice indeed experience reciprocal influence.

In spite of these notable examples, as well as Lewin’s famous dictum (1945, p. 129), “There is nothing as practical as a good theory,” perceived deficiencies in relating management theory to practice continue to challenge the academy. Even more recently than in NVSQ’s case, it has been the focus of special issues of the journals of both the British and American Academies of Management (Hodgkinson, 2001; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001). Among practitioners, much work in the management disciplines is perceived as disconnected from application, as arcane, and as not useful. Academics such as Thomas and Tymon (1982) and Srivastava (1987) suggest how researchers can make their research more relevant to practitioners. Thomas and Tymon, for example, identify five components of research relevance: descriptive relevance, goal relevance, operational validity, nonobviousness, and timeliness. Based on an analysis of twenty-three research programs, Srivastava makes a series of conceptual, design, and methodological suggestions in order to combine rigor and relevance. Others address the problem of knowledge utilization by identifying how organizations process information, how strategy is formulated, and how action is generated (Breyer and Trice, 1982; Menon and Varadarajan, 1992; Madhavan and Grover, 1998). These approaches would seem to be consistent with Boyer’s expanded concept of scholarship (1990) and to fall within his notion of “scholarship of application.” To the extent that these approaches also call for an interdisciplinary perspective (Klein, 1996; Lattuca, 2001; Palmer, 2001), they would coincide with Boyer’s concept of the scholarship of integration.

Using the two dimensions of *hard-soft* and *pure-applied*, Becher (1989) indicates how management research differs from research in other disciplines, including the physical sciences, the life sciences, and the humanities and the social sciences, and how management research is similar to other applied fields, such as engineering and education. He classifies management research as soft (having a diversity of theoretical approaches) and applied (where ideas are highly contextual and follow a pragmatic development route). Becher comments that soft, applied knowledge “. . . draws on soft pure knowledge [humanities and social sciences] as a means of understanding and coming to terms with the complexity of human situations, but does so with a view to enhancing the quality of personal and social life” (p. 15).

As a soft, applied discipline, management knowledge permits a wide array of organizing concepts, methodological approaches, and

contextual understandings. To Tranfield and Starkey (1998), the hard-soft theme within the management academy focuses on whether management research should be elite (which aspires to be a hard, paradigmatic science) or pluralist (which purports to tolerate, if not welcome, diverse conceptual and methodological approaches). Tranfield and Starkey advocate an orientation in which ideas are developed and linked to management practice, making research both theory sensitive and practice led. Concern about interaction between theory and practice in each of the perspectives of Becher (1989) and of Tranfield and Starkey (1998) ultimately aims to improve the utility of knowledge for individual practice and thereby improve organizational performance. The challenge is to do so without sacrificing rigor and generality (Pettigrew, 2001).

At the end of the day, despite a variety of views on managerial learning and management research, practitioners are universally perceived as knowledge users. Even the *Academy of Management Journal's* 2001 special issue (vol. 44, no. 2) frames the issue as knowledge transfer. The alternative prospect—that managers may be generators as well as users of practical knowledge—has been relatively neglected. But could not managers generate practical or applied knowledge, not only for themselves by reflecting on practice, but also for others through systematic empirical study of issues? Because they are grounded in real-world issues, problems, and settings, managers may have an advantage in creating practical knowledge that is useful to others. The question is whether they can frame issues of interest, abstract their ideas, and conduct systematic inquiry well enough to make the knowledge rigorous and portable. Can they, in effect, be practitioner-scholars? This article directs attention to the potential for educating practicing managers to be generators of applied knowledge.

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Conceptualizing Knowledge Production

Understanding the role of managers as knowledge generators requires a close look at dominant systems for producing knowledge. Given multiple facets and ambiguities about the relationship between theory and practice discussed above, the common distinction between basic and applied research is simplistic and inadequate. A more promising heuristic for conceptualizing knowledge production and understanding practitioner-scholar knowledge comes from Gibbons and others (1994), who distinguish between two modes of knowledge production. Here, we have attempted to abstract their distinctions into particular dimensions (presented in Table 1) for subsequent use in examining practitioner-scholar knowledge generation.

Gibbons and colleagues describe mode 1 knowledge as traditional discipline-oriented research, which is defined by the cognitive context of a particular disciplinary intellectual community. This knowledge is produced by individuals in research institutions:

Table 1. Comparison of Mode 1 and Mode 2 Production of Knowledge

	<i>Mode 1</i>	<i>Mode 2</i>
Context of knowledge production	Problem solving according to the cognitive and social norms governing academic science	Problem solving organized around a particular application and its intended use
Objective of knowledge production	Determined by protocols within a disciplinary community	Negotiated outcome of all interested parties and fitting broad criteria of usefulness
Participants	Individuals or relatively homogeneous small teams within one or several disciplines	Diverse range of specialists—a group phenomenon
Outcomes	Professionally defined advances to an accepted body of knowledge	Distinct theoretical structure and empirical practice arising out of the problem context and transcending any particular discipline
Diffusion process	Professional journals and conferences	Practitioner movements into new problem contexts and dissemination through formal and informal personal communication networks
Organization of knowledge production	Formal hierarchical organizations: universities, governmental research laboratories, corporate research units	Unplanned and short-lived convergence of heterogeneous, cross-institutional participants
Time horizon	Medium to long term	Short term
Social accountability	Established through formal institutional regulation (for example, institutional review boards for human subjects review)	Permeable boundaries through which a wide range of interested parties negotiate outcomes
Reflexivity	Relatively low	Relatively high

universities, government laboratories, or corporate research centers. Mode 1 knowledge is generated primarily by individual creative efforts and is disseminated through peer-reviewed journals and professional associations. Mode 2 system of knowledge production calls into question this traditional knowledge production process, and it coexists with the traditional form. Mode 2 knowledge is driven by an application—a specific and local problem for which an immediate solution is needed. Knowledge results from a convergence of specialized knowledge sources in the context of a defined problem. The merging of practitioners from specialized disciplines often working in different institutions makes the mode 2 knowledge production process transdisciplinary. This knowledge is produced by short-lived heterogeneous groups, and it becomes socially distributed more by practitioners moving to new occupational contexts than by their communicating through occupational and professional networks. The ultimate worth of this knowledge is determined by its practical utility. Due to the importance of the research to persons and groups

with social and political agendas, and the accessibility of these representatives to the research process, mode 2 knowledge production has a high degree of social accountability that spurs heightened levels of reflexivity by the knowledge producers.

Interpreting these concepts in the context of management research, Tranfield and Starkey (1998) suggest that mode 2 knowledge production parallels Becher's soft, applied approach (1989). Following this line of thought, Huff (2000) argues that as social and organizational problem solving gain in importance, business schools are in a position to offset the weaknesses of both mode 1 and mode 2. She proposes a third, difficult form of knowledge production, termed mode 1.5, which resides above the other modes by combining an emphasis on practice enriched with traditional academic skills in order to produce public goods. Rather than providing specific characteristics of mode 1.5, Huff outlines a framework for synthesizing modes 1 and 2. She describes mode 1.5 as using mode 1's disciplinary knowledge and academic skills to develop definitions, compare data across organizations, and propose generalizable frameworks, but to address issues that arise from practice and from conversations with people in practice, as in mode 2.

In this article, we use the frameworks of modes 1, 2, and 1.5 to further our understanding of effective practitioner-scholar research. To this end, we draw on the efforts of three managers successfully generating applied knowledge. Based on these experiences and extending Huff's idea of synthesizing modes 1 and 2, we maintain that practitioner-scholarship has an integrity and distinctive epistemology of its own and that it is not merely a weak version of academic, mode 1 knowledge production, or a full-scale conversion to mode 2 knowledge. The purpose of this article is to identify aspects of this uniqueness. We argue that the distinctiveness of practitioner-scholar knowledge lies in its purposes and in the criteria for its production. The way that these aspects are understood and developed ultimately determines the nature and influence of practitioner-scholar knowledge.

The Setting

In August 1995, the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) initiated an innovative doctoral program for senior managers, the Executive Doctor of Management (E.D.M.) Program. This is a 54-semester-credit-hour post-master's degree program structured on an intensive residency basis over a three-year period. All participants have prior master's degrees, usually the M.B.A., and at least fifteen years of work experience. Participants come from various sectors of the business world and from health, educational, and philanthropic nonprofit organizations. The program design requires them to come to the CWRU campus six times per semester, permitting them to continue their full-time

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professional positions and to be nationally and, for a few, internationally dispersed. The content of the program draws heavily on the social sciences and the humanities, expressed in such seminars as “Culture and World Politics,” “Technology and Social Systems Design,” and “Alternative Approaches to Social Problem Solving.” Approximately eighteen individuals enter the program each fall.

The Weatherhead E.D.M. Program is a member of a relatively new kind of professional doctoral program in management addressing the learning needs of advanced professionals in a degree-oriented setting. Although their substantive foci differ, a number of universities are offering doctoral degrees for working professionals that emphasize the integration of theory and practice. Examples in the United States include the Ed.D. degree in educational leadership offered by George Washington University, the Ph.D. in organizational behavior at Benedictine University and at the University of St. Thomas, the executive doctor of science in health systems management at Tulane, and the Ed.D. in organizational change at Pepperdine University. The D.B.A. in management at Cranfield University is an outstanding example of this educational development in England.

Many of the student participants in the Case Western Reserve program have focused their research on nonprofit settings. Those whose research is discussed here took four inquiry seminars over the course of the first two program years. These seminars dealt with the assumptions and practices of different ways of knowing and treated both qualitative and quantitative research skills. Emphasis was placed on the synthesis and integration of knowledge. Beginning in the second semester of their second program year, participants prepared a proposal to conduct an applied research project, which consisted of sixteen semester credit hours. We taught the inquiry seminars in which the E.D.M. students developed their proposals and subsequently served as faculty advisers on many of the projects. The objective of this article’s inquiry is to conceptualize the production of practitioner-scholar knowledge based on our interpretation of these many projects.

Features of Practitioner-Scholar Inquiry

Exhibits 1, 2, and 3 present synopses of applied research projects conducted in nonprofit settings by three E.D.M. participants (Tom Garvey, Bill Laidlaw, and Lauren Williams) as part of the fulfillment of their graduation requirements. These are provided to make meaningful the following discussion of nonprofit practitioner-scholarship, not as an empirical basis for its characteristics. Our intention is to summarize the nature of this scholarship in seven dimensions and then to analyze these characteristics in the light of mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge production. The seven dimensions are grouped into three categories of related issues: origins of inquiry, conceptual and methodological perspectives, and criterion of evaluation.

Exhibit 1. Case Study of Tom Garvey

Tom Garvey had a long record of volunteer work in his religious denomination, the Cleveland Catholic diocese, especially in the area of school finance. He was familiar with the challenges facing Catholic schools: historically dropping enrollments, noncompetitive teacher salaries, and a high proportion of non-Catholic youth (70 percent) enrolled in inner-city Catholic elementary schools. He knew that the cost of operating elementary schools within the Cleveland system could easily account for half the revenue of a local parish.

Tom's research interest was driven by the predicament of financing this alternative educational system. Should the cost of educating non-Catholic children be borne by parish members or by the diocese as a whole? Should a general subsidy for all students prevail, or should subsidies be provided on the basis of need only, for Catholic and non-Catholic students? If society as a whole was benefiting by the existence of this parochial parallel system, shouldn't the public sector find a way to support the cost of education? In short, what viable financial strategies for the diocese should be considered?

Due to his past volunteer involvement, Tom was able to gain access to the superintendent of schools for the diocese, where he learned how the school subsidy was viewed in terms of the motivation of non-Catholic parents. If parents enrolled their children for faith-based reasons (values or moral proposition), the subsidy was justified under the missionary purpose of the diocese. However, if parents enrolled their children for academic reasons, the subsidy could not be justified in the eyes of school leaders. Thus, Tom's inquiry turned strongly on the question of identifying the motivations of parents who enrolled their children in diocesan elementary schools. In addition, he wanted to determine whether parental statements concerning faith-based versus academic motives were susceptible to social influence.

The project involved before and after measures of motivations for enrolling children in Catholic schools of nearly two hundred parents in twenty focus groups. Tom found that parents consistently rated the moral proposition as a stronger motivation than academic quality, that parents' statements about their motivations were surprisingly malleable overall, and that the moral proposition as a source of motivation was more stable than the proposition about academic quality regardless of parental self-reported income or religious orientation.

Results were interpreted largely from the standpoint of the financial managers of diocesan schools whose responsibilities include meeting the challenge of continuing to fund broadly the schools within the diocese and to guard against the risk of defining the issue substantially in economic terms. Tom advocated soliciting broad community support for the importance of the schools in the development of a moral society. He envisioned clergy, principals, financial officers, and supportive parents as forming an alliance to create a full understanding among the community of the attraction of diocesan schools as well as their complete financial picture. Out of this would come a financing framework that provides a future based on equity and fiscal soundness, where cost-based education and need-based aid play equally significant roles.

Origins of Inquiry

Although research intended for academic consumption has its origins in an intended contribution to theory, practitioner-scholarship is framed in terms of a problem faced by a chosen practitioner audience.

Dimension 1: Problem Initiated. Knowledge of a specific unresolved issue or problem provided the inspiration for each of the three projects. Due to his central involvement in accreditation of management

Exhibit 2. Case Study of Bill Laidlaw

Holding a leadership position in the American Assembly of Collegiate Scholars of Business–International Association for Management Education for over two decades, Bill Laidlaw had witnessed dramatic growth in corporate universities and other proprietary providers and changes in employer expectations for management education. He identified a series of factors affecting management education, including globalization, technology, entrepreneurship, social responsibility, and employee relations. He also believed that the forms and functions of evolving relationships between business schools and corporations in management education had not been systematically studied, presenting an opportunity to conduct an inquiry that would contribute to understanding and strategic directions by leaders of both types of organizations.

On a practical level, Bill asked a series of questions about how university-based business schools and corporate universities differ in their approaches to executive education and how their programming decisions are influenced by their interpretation of environmental trends. He also wanted to study the evolving patterns of competition and collaboration among the various providers and to learn about perceived changes in the expectations of corporate consumers of management education.

On a conceptual level, Bill used concepts of population ecology to structure his fieldwork and interpret his results. For example, he employed the notion of new entries (births) and deaths (program abandonment) as organizing concepts, and he adopted a previously developed typology of management education involving program customers (individual or organizational) and program content (broad or focused) to analyze program niches or segments. He adapted theoretical concepts of reliability, accountability, and reproducibility to the circumstances of his context as program branding, outcome evaluation, and vulnerability. He also employed concepts of boundary spanning, buffering, bridging, and coevolution to explore and interpret institutional relationships in this area.

The fieldwork on this project was organized in two rounds of interviews. The first round consisted of semistructured interviews with nine individuals at six business schools at Carnegie Research I universities, plus six corporate interviews. The second round consisted of seven structured interviews at seven institutions across four additional Carnegie categories and an additional three company representatives. The semistructured interviews were coded to be compatible with the more structured interviews of the second round.

Results indicated the environmental perceptions and interpretations of leaders in business schools and corporate universities that led them to start and to end management education programs. Evidence was demonstrated for the evolutionary pattern of executive programs as suggested by the previously published typology of programs, and buffering strategies employing forms of collaboration and competition were identified. The research also discussed vulnerabilities faced by differing types of executive education programs and the connection between outcomes assessment and the intensity of producer-provider relationships.

A variety of implications for program design and decision making for university and corporate leaders were suggested. Greatest growth opportunities lie in closed enrollment programs, focusing on both customized and organizational problem solving. For most institutions, a balance between open and closed programs was a recommended strategy. The study described a variety of practices and actions that appeared to favor the creation and survival of program species, and it described action recommendations for both business schools and corporations for deriving value from a process of coevolution.

Exhibit 3. Case Study of Lauren Williams

As a senior strategic planner for a community hospital in a highly competitive health care market, Lauren Williams engaged in numerous discussions concerning alliances between her own and other health care organizations. Despite considering merger and acquisition strategies, her organization chose to develop joint ventures focused on select clinical services. These collaborations build continuums of care through integration of previously autonomous providers. The resulting quasi-integration strategy was considered prudent given the observation that many hospital mergers were not living up to their promise and were riskier than initially presumed. Often, newly merged entities attributed their disappointment to sociocultural differences. While most literature and practitioner attention is given to the economic and business aspects of health care alliances and assumed impersonality in alliances, Lauren's experience pointed to the importance of the social dimension. She saw practical value in investigating the manner in which hospital representatives developed their relationship in the crucial early period leading up to the decision to align or not.

The study's central questions concerned how negotiators interpreted their early interactions with their counterparts and the consequence of these interpretations for the alignment decision. Particularly, what types of interactions led to the building or eroding of trust and to the effective or ineffective management of institutional relationships? She began her investigation by talking with a small number of her peers, who indicated to her the importance of their assessment of their counterparts. The driving concern was the prospect of being exploited by one's alliance partner. These talks confirmed for Lauren the value of proceeding with her inquiry and that economic action is embedded in structures of social relations. She found guiding concepts from several sources: discussions of alliance formation, the growing literature on trust, and the more established literature of negotiations.

A major challenge for this study lay in identifying methods that would yield knowledge connecting with practitioners' views and experiences. Lauren's first method, designed to mine the rich descriptions found in ethnographic case studies, was an interpretive synthesis of previous studies in this area. This intensive synthetic analysis of three carefully selected empirical studies led to several themes, including the functions of the social relationship and trust in alliance negotiation and identification of a sequence of factors that influence trust perceptions, including reciprocity and joint problem solving. This approach was complemented by a thematic analysis of seven interviews with strategic planners experienced in health care alliance negotiations. These interviews were rich, yielding additional themes as well as descriptive examples that tied directly to the study's health care context.

A notable feature of Lauren's project was its integration of multiple sources of knowledge. The project's most important chapter brought together four elements: themes of the interpretive synthesis; themes and examples from the interviews; material from the several literatures of alliance creation, trust, and negotiations; and Lauren's personal experiences in alliance negotiations. This chapter presented ideas and conclusions laced with examples and description in a fashion intended to be accessible by and informative for expert practitioners. The consequence was practical knowledge concerning not only the building of trust and shared joint problem solving among alliance negotiators, but also a broader delineation of the role of effective negotiators and their boundary-spanning relationships within and across the involved institutions. The study pointed to the importance of negotiators' establishing and using webs of trusted collegial connections, and it identified the nature of skillful exchange with negotiator counterparts.

education institutions, Laidlaw (1999; see Exhibit 2) was in a position to question how dramatic societal changes were challenging the adaptive capability of management education programs. He saw a great deal of turbulence in executive education programming and new forms of university-corporate relationships emerging in this field. His research efforts sought to inform business school and corporate leaders of the dynamics of their industry and of their strategic choices.

Similarly, the work of Garvey (1999; Exhibit 1) and Williams (2000; Exhibit 3) arose out of their personal experiences—Garvey, as a volunteer in his religious organization and Williams as a practicing manager working on strategic alliance development in the health care industry. Similar to Laidlaw, each person's personal experience with an issue or problem provided purpose and direction to their academic work, and in each study, conclusions were directed to persons in positions to use the information generated in the study. Although each benefited from concepts and theory, each student's personal experiences made the topic compelling.

Dimension 2: Audience Centered. Different actors and audiences frequently see different aspects of a problem situation, or they may identify wholly different problems. Unresolved situations embody conflicting perceptions and preferences. While attention to political complexities is an advantage of practice-oriented inquiry, it is limited by the need to adopt its own voice. It is important for practitioner-scholars to consider what voices they choose to adopt, choices that need to be informed by thoughtful analysis of the situation, the problem, and their audiences. The issue is to make a strategic choice of the audience for one's work from the standpoint of developing knowledge that promises to be influential for that user group.

The primary audience for Garvey was church officials with whom he had previously worked in a volunteer capacity on school finance issues. For Williams, the audience was directors of planning and strategic alliances in hospitals, such as the one where she had played this role herself. Laidlaw's audience was corporate and business school leaders. He had come into contact with many of these leaders in the course of his work at the accrediting organization. In each case, however, adopting a particular voice would necessarily give less attention to other parties' interests. Garvey only indirectly represented parents and teachers in the Catholic school system and did not speak to the interests of Catholic and non-Catholic parents in the public schools or to taxpayers in this municipality in general. Williams did not address the potential concerns of employees and clients of health care organizations whose survival might be threatened by successful consolidation taking place through strategic alliances, and Laidlaw did not give voice to business schools that might well suffer from the new forms of cooperation and coevolution being adopted by a number of schools and corporations. The choice of an audience is imperative, and due to the inevitable boundaries it imposes, it is also necessarily limiting with regard to the problems that the research will address.

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Dimension 3: Addressing a Knowledge Deficiency That Inhibits Practice. In order to increase the likelihood that particular impacts will arise from their efforts, practitioner-scholars carry the burden of identifying specific knowledge that might influence the situation of interest. They need to focus research objectives on knowledge deficiencies on the part of the intended user group. Practitioner-scholars assume that particular knowledge is at least as important as personal and political factors in solving problems, and they need to make explicit their understanding of how improved knowledge will contribute to the situation studied. They gain this understanding from their own experiences and from explicitly questioning practitioners about the knowledge that they desire.

For Williams, practitioners lacked knowledge of the importance and the skill of building trust and shared problem solving in alliance negotiations. The study intended to cover a gap in knowledge pertaining to negotiators' relationships across their own and others' organizational boundaries. For Garvey, diocesan administrators lacked detailed and specific knowledge of parental motivations for sending their children to Catholic schools, and they lacked knowledge of how to translate information about motivation into financial policies. Laidlaw's work was premised on the assumption that business school and corporate leaders did not clearly understand the forces shaping their industry or adequately understand viable institutional strategies for negotiating these forces. Each of the three engaged in empirical research designed specifically to generate new knowledge in the identified areas.

Practitioner-scholars carry the burden of identifying specific knowledge that might influence the situation of interest

Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives

A second set of issues to guide practitioner-scholarship relates to the role of theory and to epistemological choices that transcend paradigmatic orthodoxy.

Dimension 4: Theoretically Informed. Knowledge production for practitioner-scholars is informed by prior writing in two ways. First, virtually all researchers can identify *concept-near* materials: writings close to the situation of interest to the researcher. These materials use terms and concepts familiar to practitioners and study roughly the same phenomena in a similar context. This literature grounds practitioner-scholars in a discussion of the specific situation and keeps them focused on the applied issue. Garvey's work on financing Catholic education illustrates a project with a relative abundance of concept-near writings, since the issue is widely recognized.

Practitioner-scholars also need to inform their work with attention to *concept-far* ideas. These theories and concepts may bear only a distant relation to the researcher's central issue or problem but have the potential to illuminate the situation more effectively than examining it in more direct and usual terms. No one, to Laidlaw's knowledge, had examined changes in executive education in terms of concepts of population ecology, an approach that opened up new ways of examining the knowledge deficiency that he had identified.

Theory is selected for its potential for lending insight into the problem situation, not due to a desire to enhance that theory. The research is not knowledge application; it does not derive knowledge for practice from theory. Rather, using theoretical material helps the researcher understand the issue more abstractly and more richly than otherwise would be the case and creates the opportunity to refine the theory based on the scholar's empirical study. Concept-far materials facilitate the possibility for portability of the research, so that Williams's ideas about trust and shared problem solving among alliance negotiators in hospital settings might find application in other cross-organizational settings. The knowledge contribution moves from the particular to the general, in the sense of transcending the study's immediate practice context (Aram and Salipante, forthcoming).

Practitioner-scholar research uses the issue or problem setting to integrate theories

This approach also allows, and in fact encourages, analyses of empirical data that draw from multiple theoretical perspectives, perhaps even arising in different disciplines in keeping with the *soft-applied* nature of influential management research. Practitioner-scholar research uses the issue or problem setting to integrate theories. In this way, the research is informed by theory with the intention of making an original knowledge contribution to the problem at hand.

Dimension 5: Epistemologically Open. Inductive (or theory building) and deductive (or theory testing) modes of research are ideal types. Practitioner-scholar work often combines them in different ways, making the distinction less clear. For example, Garvey developed hypotheses in his work, although the hypotheses were constructed from prior concept-near fieldwork and were not theoretical. Williams employed an interpretive synthesis of prior empirical work that generated themes that she then amplified and extended through field interviews. Laidlaw divided his research into two stages, the first more open-ended and exploratory and the second more structured and designed to evaluate a number of claims arising from the first stage. Illustrating Tranfield and Starkey's proposal (1998) that management research should avoid paradigmatic orthodoxy, none of these approaches fit the ideal types of inductive and deductive research; rather, they borrowed characteristics and processes from each way of knowing.

Dimension 6: Attentive to Validity. Questions of validity assume major importance because practitioner-scholars deal with real-world circumstances where controls on variables or random sampling are not feasible, theory development is not a central purpose, and multimethodological paradigms or ways of knowing are desirable. Always important, the question, "How could I be wrong?" assumes an even more critical role in practitioner-scholar inquiry in each stage of the process. Consciousness about validity, for example, was present for Williams, Laidlaw, and Garvey through a series of operations:

- An explicit logic of case selection
- An awareness of researcher-participant interaction

- Close evaluation of the timeliness and the methods of recording information
- An explicit search for inconsistencies in the data and a conscious attempt to collect and evaluate any discrepant information
- The use of multiple methods
- Checking inferences and interpretations with study participants,
- The researcher's effort to generate alternative interpretations and to assess their value

Criterion of Evaluation

The characteristics just discussed principally involve the assurance of rigor in knowledge production. The corresponding theme of relevance underlies our final dimension, a criterion for assessing the work of practitioner-scholars.

Dimension 7: Use-Based Assessment. Just as practitioner-scholar research starts with attention to the problem or issue and with an intended audience, its success needs to be judged in terms of the insights and ideas offered to knowledge users. The challenge of this inquiry is to avoid sacrificing real-world relevance as the researcher seeks to provide rigor to the research. Timeliness of knowledge is important to this relevance. The short time frame of the E.D.M. Program (three years) meant that Garvey, Laidlaw, and Williams produced knowledge that was immediately relevant to the problems of contemporary practice that they had identified.

The question of use is whether participants in practice situations understand their circumstances and their options any differently due to the researcher's inquiry and whether research-based action leads to intended consequences, or at least advances the discussion about the issues among interested parties. Whether the work by Garvey, Williams, and Laidlaw achieves this objective depends on their putting their efforts into the public domain through publication and conference presentation, which will be another step in their development as practitioner-scholars. Each made efforts to write important segments of their research projects in a style accessible to practitioners. Furthermore, in accordance with ideas of mode 2 knowledge production, the scholars' practice roles mean that they can put their knowledge into practice directly, demonstrating its practical efficacy to their associates.

Practitioner-Scholar Knowledge Production

This review of applied research projects authored by three E.D.M. participants permits a preliminary comparison of practitioner-scholar research in the nonprofit sector in the light of Gibbons's mode 1 and mode 2 systems of knowledge production. Although each E.D.M. author studied a different problem and a different setting, similarities in their work have been identified in the discussion above. The major similarities are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics and Researchers' Actions for Practitioner-Scholarship

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Practitioner-Scholars' Research Actions</i>
1. Problem initiated	Addressing societal turbulence and institutions' strategic uncertainty. Connecting with researcher's personal experience as practitioner or volunteer.
2. Practitioner audience centered	Choosing one audience of practitioners as research clients and limiting study scope accordingly. Adopting a voice appropriate to the audience.
3. Addressing a knowledge deficiency that inhibits practice	Questioning and observing practitioners. Particularizing knowledge needs to the context-specific level.
4. Theoretically informed	Identifying multiple context-near and context-distant conceptual resources. Using the problem to integrate theories.
5. Epistemologically open	Using sequenced phases of induction and deduction, interpretation, and empirical testing.
6. Attentive to validity	Being reflexive about research design, data inconsistencies, results from differing methods, and match with practitioners' interpretations.
7. Use-based assessment	Connecting with and expanding practitioners' theories in use. Disseminating into the public domain of practitioners through publication and presentation. Applying to own practice.

The following comments indicate how these Table 2 dimensions of practitioner-scholar inquiry (with the dimensions' numbers noted in parentheses below) relate to the dimensions of the two modes of knowledge production as described in Table 1. Is practitioner-scholar research, as exemplified by these three projects, more like mode 1 or more like mode 2, or does it stand as an alternative mode of knowledge production?

- Context of knowledge production. Being problem initiated (1), taking its point of departure from an issue or problem rather than from theory, practitioner-scholar research parallels mode 2 knowledge production much more closely than mode 1.
- Objective of knowledge production. Being audience centered (2), practitioner-scholars intend not only to address the issue but also to communicate their insights more broadly. Their objective thereby lies closer to mode 1 inquiry, as does their reliance on disciplinary protocols for validity (6). However, like mode 2, the relevant community is other organizational leaders or policymakers, as opposed to a disciplinary community, so epistemologies are not

limited to those of a specific academic discipline (5) and use in practice (7) is the goal.

- **Participants.** In the context of research work for an academic degree, practitioner-scholar work looks more like mode 1 on this dimension. However, as graduates who apply and extend their research-based ideas in their own practice (7), their follow-on knowledge generation work may involve more heterogeneous participants and have a greater affinity for mode 2 processes.

- **Outcomes.** Like mode 2 research, practitioner-scholar work draws theories (4) and methods (5) from a variety of the social sciences and humanities, and it aims to generate knowledge for practice (3).

- **Diffusion process.** As in mode 1 knowledge generation, practitioner-scholars want to diffuse their ideas through journals, magazines, and conferences (7). They attempt to influence individuals' thinking using these means as well as the mode 2 means of face-to-face relationships and personal communication networks.

- **Organization of knowledge production.** Being situated in alternative doctoral programs, practitioner-scholar inquiry lies between the hierarchical organizational context of mode 1 and the unplanned and short-lived manner of mode 2. This research is more planned and deliberate than the latter and less institutionally structured than the former.

- **Time horizon.** By being attentive to validity (6) and designing their studies accordingly and by drawing on context-distant theories (4), the projects described constitute a longer time commitment and knowledge half-life than mode 2. Their concern with practitioner use (7) drives them toward a shorter time horizon than the more academic knowledge production cycle of mode 1.

- **Social accountability.** In the context of a university degree requirement, practitioner-scholar research falls under the human subjects review specifications of all mode 1 work. According to mode 2 inquiry, the engagement with practitioner stakeholders (3) provides a higher degree of social accountability than mode 1 research.

- **Reflexivity.** Toiling in the world of pressing issues and problems (1), it is anticipated that practitioner-scholars will demonstrate a high degree of reflexivity about their work and will maintain a greater affinity to mode 2 in this area.

This commentary indicates that practitioner-scholarship shares features with mode 1 on some dimensions, mode 2 on others, and both on several of the knowledge generation dimensions. In terms of its organization of knowledge production, practitioner-scholar inquiry appears to be somewhat distinctive. Taken as a whole, this knowledge production process is not a variation of one or the other of these forms. Rather, it is a particular combination with its own identity. It can be categorized as one version of Huff's mode 1.5 (2000), in that it uses academic knowledge and skills to inquire into issues that arise from practice. It draws from and occasionally extends beyond modes 1 and 2, seeking to achieve a combination of

Practitioner-scholars want to diffuse their ideas through journals, magazines, and conferences

rigor, relevance, generality, and particularity above that aspired to by either mode alone.

The Future of Practitioner-Scholarship in Nonprofit Management

This article constitutes an effort to conceptualize the process of practitioner-scholar inquiry in the context of a relatively young and unusual doctoral program at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. Addressing nontraditional doctoral participants who are advanced practitioners, the program has the opportunity to shape a new vision and practice of inquiry, a vision that aspires to combine theory and practice, concept and action in innovative and influential ways. This article seeks to provide a structure to describe the features of practitioner-scholar research in order to encourage this form of scholarship more widely. It examines and conceptualizes selective practitioner-scholar research projects in the nonprofit sector.

We have found the framework of mode 1 and mode 2 research (Gibbons and others, 1994) a useful conceptual structure by which to examine three examples of practitioner-scholar inquiry in the E.D.M. Program. This theory allows us to clarify and differentiate the purposes, processes, and outcomes of practitioner-scholar inquiry by providing a frame of reference with which to compare and contrast a small sample of completed projects in the E.D.M. Program. Ideas about mode 1 and mode 2 research also allow us to introduce additional considerations that arise in the conduct of practitioner-scholar inquiry and to cast it as one example of Huff's mode 1.5 knowledge production, holding promise for melding the most desirable characteristics of each mode. As in her analysis, practitioner-scholar inquiry rises from practice, and it benefits from academic skills in "developing definitions, comparing data across organizational settings, and suggesting generalizable frameworks for further sensemaking" (Huff, 2000, p. 292).

As an applied soft discipline, management research should be ideally suited to take advantage of its cognitive structure to integrate the best of modes 1 and 2. Why has this not happened? We believe that a global characterization of desirable management research as applied and soft oversimplifies the situation because a wide range of ideological positions exists within the broad area of management. Tranfield and Starkey (1998) review the debate between the wisdom of forcing paradigmatic uniformity onto management research versus encouraging a diversity of concepts and methods. In fact, within management, there are views of desirable knowledge that are hard and soft, pure and applied. Practitioner-scholar research, in this sense, tends toward soft and more applied inquiry even within a field that is characterized overall as soft and applied in relation to other disciplines. At the same time, practitioner

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scholarship seeks to attain a high standard that comprises both rigor and relevance.

As illustrated by the projects discussed in this article, the non-profit arena seems well suited to practitioner-scholarship. Issues of societal significance attract the attention of reflective managers from within and outside the sector and motivate their research. The sector contains many advanced professionals originally trained in a medical or social science who move into managerial positions and bring a scholarly perspective to their work. Their background suits them to becoming, in our terms, practitioner-scholars or, in Van Til's terms (2000), pracademics.

The promise of practitioner-scholarship is rooted in the differing relationship of researcher to subjects and to study context. By living in the world of practice, nonprofit practitioner-scholars can connect with practitioners' practical knowledge, making research products more relevant and attractive to other practitioners. At the same time, the practitioner-scholar is a skilled researcher who draws on tested theories and methods from mode 1 sources and remains subject to its concerns for validity. Practical orientation and scholarly skill are combined in the individual researcher rather than being a hoped-for product of interaction among a network of differing specialists. Trained practitioner-scholars continually engage with three groups—practitioners, a community of similar practitioner-scholars, and traditional academicians—to maintain their special orientation toward knowledge generation.

We invite dialogue and critique, particularly from others who are engaged in practitioner-scholarship or in doctoral programs that educate practitioner-scholars. The challenge at this time is to learn how to develop such scholars in a fashion that draws from modes 1 and 2 without their migrating into one camp or the other. Despite calls for greater intellectual diversity in management research (Van Maanen, 1995), management academics, especially in the United States, have conformed to a relatively narrow disciplinary orthodoxy in their published work (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). Huff (2000) notes that this is due in part to pressures from the universities in which they reside. Consequently, practitioner-scholarship cannot be expected to find a long-term home in the academic disciplines. However, we have found our faculty colleagues from management and other disciplines to be interested in educating practitioner-scholars and guiding these scholars' research in a more epistemologically open fashion. These faculty are participating in working out the distinctive characteristics and processes of advanced education for practitioner-scholarship. It is one step on the way to creating a viable community of nonprofit practitioner-scholars having expectations and epistemologies that sustain a unique mode of knowledge production (Aram and Salipante, forthcoming). A number of nonprofit scholars in the E.D.M. Program have presented their work at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action

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(ARNOVA) and see this association, with its defining contextual focus, as one home for such a community.

The long-term objective reflected in this article is to make a substantive contribution to management education and research at a time when multiple careers and life-long learning are increasingly common, and where an interconnected world, advanced communication technologies, and a compelling need for economic and social development create issues that transcend sectors as well as organizational and national boundaries. These problems present intellectual and practical challenges for institutional leaders that can be aided by research capabilities that are both practical and scholarly.

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