

# Graduate HRD Programs in South Korea

Advances in Developing Human  
Resources  
1–17

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DOI: 10.1177/1523422315572621

adhr.sagepub.com



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## Abstract

### The Problem.

To address national issues associated with societal development, many countries are recognizing the need to educate individuals who will lead developmental initiatives. While many previous studies have been conducted to examine how and what content of human resource development (HRD) has been taught in Western countries, similar research efforts have been rarely conducted in Asian countries such as South Korea. The lack of comparative study creates a research gap in understanding how HRD programs have been designed and implemented in different countries.

### The Solution.

In an effort to meet this research need, this study investigates the current status of graduate HRD programs and what constitutes the field of HRD in South Korea.

### The Stakeholders.

Stakeholders are faculty members who are teaching in HRD programs in South Korea, HRD practitioners in South Korean organizations, and cross-cultural researchers focusing on curriculum studies.

## Keywords

graduate HRD programs, professional HRD organizations, HRD trends, South Korea

The importance of developing key human resources at the organizational, local, and national level in the formal educational system through graduate human resource development (HRD) programs has been a keen issue for many researchers. The burgeoning of this field of research is especially true as more organizations and countries try to achieve organizational and national goals and competitiveness through more knowledge-oriented businesses and industries (Florida, 2006; Garelli, 2006). Many

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middle and high-income countries have emphasized the criticality of supportive national policies and strategies facilitating the untapped potential of nationwide human resources with an intention to obtain national wealth and global competitiveness. South Korea, marked as one of the fastest developing countries in the world (“Economy of South Korea,” 2014), is not an exception in this trend of increased attention toward HRD as it strives to become a high-income country.

Like surrounding Asian countries such as China and Japan, the cultural, spiritual, and ethnic background of South Korea has been significantly influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism (Y. Lee, 2009). As the country entered the modern era however, the culture of South Korea has been influenced by Western cultures coupled with Christianity-based religious orientations. As a result, South Korea has developed a unique social, ethnic, and spiritual culture that is different from other Asian countries. While many of the general patterns, structures, and intentions of human resource efforts at the organizational and national levels are similar to those of other Asian countries, the government agencies and business organizations of South Korea have adopted distinct national and organizational policies and strategies to achieve organizational and national development goals and initiatives. Within this national and organizational environment, the current HRD systems and practices of South Korea have been formed.

Among the many efforts to address the lack of quality human resources for national and societal development of a country, educating the next generation to lead organizational- and national-level HRD initiatives has been a key national issue for many countries (Alagaraja & Wang, 2012; McLean, 2004; Oh, Ryu, & Choi, 2013). In line with this HRD trend, academic institutions and universities in South Korea have diligently attempted to satisfy the changing needs of national and organizational workforces by continuously adapting and changing their delivery methods for graduate HRD programs and the composition of corresponding curricula. Unfortunately, the content and status of HRD effort in South Korea has rarely been introduced in Western countries, causing researchers difficulty in comparing how HRD education has been designed and implemented in the East and the West. In an effort to meet this research need, this study investigates and introduces the current status of graduate HRD programs in South Korea.

## **Research Purpose and Questions**

In searching for detailed information, it is apparent that there is a significant lack of research about graduate HRD programs in South Korea as compared with HRD programs in the United States. It is acknowledged that the Academy of HRD has played a central role in continuously assessing the status and trends of HRD programs in the United States; however, there has been little research to assess the status and development of HRD programs in South Korea. In addressing this research need, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What is the history of the development of graduate HRD programs in South Korea?

**Research Question 2:** What are the academic characteristics and content of the graduate HRD programs in South Korea?

**Research Question 3:** What is the teaching and learning context of the graduate HRD programs of South Korea?

**Research Question 4:** What are the roles of professional HRD organizations in supporting the development of graduate HRD programs and the HRD community in South Korea?

By answering these questions, this study expects to identify the current foundations of HRD in South Korea. In addition, this study will contribute to the global community of HRD scholars through comparative findings considered to be critical by many international HRD researchers (Cseh, Krisztián, & Nemeskéri, 2006; Kuchinke, 2003).

## Method

The sources and data collection methods of our research were threefold, consisting of literature review, website analysis, and phone interviews with academic program coordinators of the graduate HRD programs of South Korea. To answer the first research question, a literature review of journals, books, and articles in South Korea was conducted to identify the history of the development of HRD programs in the nation. For the second and the third research questions, searches of institutional websites were conducted, identifying 12 institutions offering graduate HRD programs. For some graduate HRD programs, the academic information could not be found on institutional websites. In these cases, the collaborating researcher in South Korea directly conducted phone interviews with the graduate HRD program coordinators to collect needed information.

For data about professional organizations of HRD in South Korea, searches for major HRD association websites were performed. These web searches led to the identification of five HRD associations or organizations: The Korea Association of Human Resource Development (KAHRD), the Korean Society for Training and Development (KSTD), the Korean Society for Learning and Performance (KSLP), the Adult and Continuing Education of Korea (ACEK), and the Korean Joint Association of HRD (KJAHRD). For detailed information, content analysis of the websites of the five HRD associations or organizations was conducted.

## A Brief History and Development of HRD Programs in South Korea

While there is general agreement that the origin of Western HRD is rooted in the merchant and guilds systems of the Middle Ages (Roberts, Walton, & Lim, 2014), South Korea's long history of HRD originated from the ancient apprenticeship programs designed to select and train officers for government agencies and develop artisans and craftsmen to provide necessary materials for central government functions. In the modern era, South Korea experienced national and local demand for a well-educated

and skilled workforce to address various workplace labor shortage issues. In the 1950s, as the influx of U.S. military service programs and personnel spread into various organizations in South Korea during and after the Korean War, university-level HRD programs were created in several institutions in South Korea.

The present-day development of HRD programs in South Korea, however, began in the 1990s. Since this period, the HRD area has been one of the fastest growing academic fields as South Korean society has been in great need of competent HRD professionals to deal with various workforce issues such as employee performance improvement, organizational innovation, globalization, and technology impact on organizational effectiveness (E. S. Lee, Chang, & Kim, 2011). In South Korea, HRD is considered an applied and new discipline composed of research theories and practices in business, psychology, adult education, and instructional systems. The development of HRD has mirrored South Korea's rapid economic development and modernization of the society since the 1970s. Whereas in the early 1990s, there were only two graduate HRD programs in South Korea; in 2013, there were 26 graduate HRD programs (Lim, Song, Choi, & Kim, 2013). HRD programs in South Korea have grown rapidly for two reasons. First, the national educational policies devised and implemented by the South Korean government in the early 2000s encompassed a wide variety of actionable domains including not only economic development but also social and cultural development (Oh et al., 2013). Second, the changes in the policy development reflected the conceptualization of HRD at the national level, and this phenomenon spurred the growth of HRD in South Korea (Kuchinke, Fu, & Oh, 2006; McLean, 2004; Oh et al., 2013).

## **Institutional and Academic Characteristics of HRD Programs in South Korea**

### *Institutional Information of Graduate HRD Programs in South Korea*

In South Korea, graduate HRD programs are offered at the master's and doctoral levels. HRD programs in South Korea have two admission systems for graduate students who want to obtain a graduate HRD degree: regular graduate degree and professional graduate degree. First, a regular graduate degree (at the master's and doctoral level) is designed for individuals who seek academic and research careers within HRD or closely related disciplines. Currently, there are 13 graduate HRD programs that fall in this category. More specifically, 6 out of the 13 graduate HRD programs are offered from general education departments, 2 programs are offered in instructional systems and technology departments, 2 programs are offered in lifelong learning departments, and 3 programs are offered in other types of departments such as joint departmental structure (e.g., vocational education department, and agricultural education department).

Professional graduate degrees are offered in 13 graduate HRD programs in a variety of departments such as the technology education, HRD, female HRD, educational administration, educational consulting, and instructional technology. Professional graduate HRD programs differ from regular graduate degree programs in that they

recruit students who are active practitioners and full-time employees in the workplace; these programs provide job-oriented curriculum content and flexible class schedules to meet the needs of students working full time. Table 1 provides the institutional information of graduate HRD programs including the names of universities, colleges, and departments.

### *Characteristics of Graduate HRD Academic Programs*

**Degree requirements.** Twenty-four graduate programs offer both master's and doctoral HRD degrees, only 3 graduate programs offer doctoral HRD degrees. The reason for this is twofold. For some institutions, they do not have a sufficient number of faculty members to cover doctoral degree programs. For others, they are not qualified to offer doctoral degree programs. The degree requirement structure for master's and doctoral degrees are similar. From the web searches of each institutional website, the following information was collected.

Master's degree programs require credit hours ranging between 24 and 30. Most programs require a thesis and thesis credit hours are additional. All graduate HRD programs require the passing of a comprehensive exam as part of the degree requirement. Foreign language classes (e.g., English) is another requirement for all programs; however, students can have this requirement waived if they pass a foreign language proficiency test at a certain level (e.g., test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL), test of English for International communication (TOEIC), etc.).

Doctoral degrees require credit hours ranging between 30 and 60. Among them, nine programs require 36 credit hours for doctoral degree completion excluding dissertation credit hours. All programs require the passing of qualifying exams and the scope of qualifying exams varies for each doctoral program (some programs require the passing of exams for 2 to 4 courses whereas other programs require the passing of exams for more than 4 courses). Like master's degree requirements, all doctoral programs require certain levels of English proficiency. Successful proposal and defense of a dissertation is a necessary requirement for all graduate doctoral HRD programs.

**Faculty composition.** The number of faculty members serving graduate HRD programs in South Korea varies from institution to institution. Some programs have between one and two, whereas other programs have four or five full-time faculty members to run graduate HRD programs. In our investigation, we did not collect the information about the number of adjunct and part-time faculty for each program. In most programs we studied, the size of programs is very small (between 20 and 30 students). For larger programs where there are more than two faculty, the number of students is between 50 and 100. Table 2 provides the number of faculty of each graduate HRD program.

**Topical content of graduate HRD curricula.** While searching for the curricular content of graduate HRD programs of South Korean institutions, we found that graduate students in all but five HRD programs are required to take core courses. The most frequently offered core courses are research methodology and foundations of HRD followed by

**Table 1.** Institutional Information of Graduate HRD Programs in South Korea.

Admission category	Institution	Name of college	Name of program
Regular graduate degree	Ajoo University	College of education	Lifelong learning/HRD education <sup>a</sup>
	Chung-Ang University	College of education	HRD <sup>a</sup>
	Donggeui University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Dongguk University	College of education	HRD
	Ewha Woman's University	College of education	Educational technology
	Hanyang University	College of education	Educational technology
	Inha University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Korea University	College of education	Adult continuing education
	Seoul National University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Seoul National University	College of life science	Agricultural and industrial education
	Sookmyung Woman's University	College of education	HRD policy studies <sup>a</sup>
	Soongsil University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Yonsei University	College of education	HRD/work education
	Sum	13	
Professional graduate degree	Ajoo University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Chung-Ang University	College of global HRD	HRD
	Dongduk Woman's University	College of education	Educational consulting
	Donggeui University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Dongguk University	College of education	Educational administration
	Ewha Woman's University	College of education	Educational technology
	Hanyang University	College of education	Educational technology
	Inha University	College of education	Lifelong learning education
	Korea University	College of education	HRD
	Korea University of Technology and Education	School of techno HRD	HRD
	Sookmyung Woman's University	College of woman HRD	Woman HRD
	Soongsil University	College of education	Lifelong learning/HRD education
	Yonsei University	College of education	HRD
	Sum	13	

Note. HRD = human resource development.

<sup>a</sup>Only offers doctoral HRD degree.

**Table 2.** Faculty Information of Graduate HRD Programs in South Korea.

Institution	Types of admission <sup>a</sup>	Number of faculty
Korea University	Regular + Professional	2
Dongguk University	Regular + Professional	1
Dongjei University	Regular + Professional	1
Seoul National University	Regular (education)	1
Seoul National University	Regular (agricultural education)	5
Sookmyung Woman's University	Regular + Professional	1
Soongsil University	Regular + Professional	2
Ajoo University	Regular + Professional	1
Yonsei University	Regular + Professional	1
Ewha Woman's University	Regular + Professional	2
Inha University	Regular + Professional	1
Chung-Ang University	Regular + Professional	4
Hanyang University	Regular + Professional	2

Note. HRD = human resource development.

<sup>a</sup>Indicates admission into a regular or professional graduate degree.

quantitative research methods, instructional system design, qualitative research methods, adult learning, program development, and organizational development. The reason why most programs require both quantitative and qualitative research methods is due to the learning needs stemming from thesis and dissertation completion requirements for all graduate HRD programs. Other topics of HRD core classes include educational technology studio, management education, managing educational resources, corporate education, administration of industrial education, history of industrial education, industrial/organizational psychology, woman and work, performance appraisal, personnel psychology, organizational psychology, job/task analysis, and vocational psychology. Table 3 illustrates the title of core classes required by 21 graduate HRD programs.

Graduate HRD programs in South Korea also offer a variety of elective courses. The most frequently offered electives are foundations of HRD, lifelong learning and education, research methodology, vocational education, and program evaluation. There are more than 100 elective courses available for all programs. Table 4 provides the frequency information of the top 20 elective courses.

### *Teaching and Learning Context of Graduate HRD Programs in South Korea*

Similar to the student population in the United States., the graduate students of HRD programs in South Korea are classified into two major groups: full-time students and part-time students with full-time working status. One unique difference is that Korean

**Table 3.** Core Courses of Graduate HRD Programs.

Core courses	f (%)
Research methodology	16 (11.8)
Foundation of HRD	16 (11.8)
Quantitative research method	14 (10.3)
Instructional system design	13 (9.6)
Qualitative research method	8 (5.9)
Adult education	5 (3.7)
Program development	5 (3.7)
Organizational development	5 (3.7)
Leadership	4 (2.9)
Distance learning	4 (2.9)
Communication	3 (2.2)
Adult learning theory	3 (2.2)
Program evaluation	3 (2.2)
Human performance technology	3 (2.2)
Career development	3 (2.2)
Lifelong learning	2 (1.4)
Instructional technology	2 (1.4)
Strategic HRD	2 (1.4)
HRD consulting	2 (1.4)
Vocational education	2 (1.4)
Performance management	1 (0.7)
e-HRD	1 (0.7)
Other topics	18 (13)
Sum	135

Note. HRD = human resource development.

universities offer two separate master's degree programs targeted at the different student populations as indicated previously (regular graduate degree programs vs. professional graduate degree programs). For regular graduate degree programs, most students take full-time credit loads (nine credit hours or more) while for professional graduate degree programs, most students take partial credit loads of six credit hours or more. The major focus of regular graduate degree programs is on teaching research skills to graduate students who plan to pursue academic or research careers, while professional degree programs focus on improving expertise and professional competencies needed for a student's current and/or future career. Due to this difference in program emphasis, the teaching context is different in that regular programs utilize research-related learning materials and methods (e.g., journal articles, research methodologies, research theories) whereas professional programs heavily adopt practical learning materials and methods (e.g., case studies, fieldwork examples, benchmarking visits). Even though the proportion is very small for regular graduate degree programs, some South



**Table 4.** Elective Courses of Graduate HRD Programs.

Name of elective courses	<i>f</i>
Foundation of HRD	40
Lifelong learning and education	36
Research methodology	23
Vocational education	17
Program evaluation	17
Organizational development	17
Career development	16
Lifelong learning	16
Adult learning theory	15
Leadership development	14
Practicum	14
Instructional systems design	13
Distance learning	13
Program development	13
Quantitative research method	13
Developmental psychology for adult learning	12
Managing lifelong learning	12
e-Learning	12
Leadership theory and practice	12
Lifelong learning policies	12

Note. HRD = human resource development.

Korean universities admit foreign students, mostly from Asian and African countries such as China, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Morocco, and Kenya. Furthermore, Korean universities offer separate graduate HRD classes for the two respective graduate degree programs, which is not typical in U.S. institutions.

In terms of teaching and learning delivery methods, the graduate HRD programs of South Korea use similar instructional methods as U.S. graduate HRD programs such as lecture, case studies, discussions, group activities, and individual or group projects. Evaluation of student performance typically involves quizzes, midterm and final exams, term papers, and project evaluation. Concerning classroom lecture, it was interesting to note that several universities offer some of their graduate HRD classes in English as small numbers of their students are from foreign countries. Various learning management systems (LMS) are also utilized for class administration purposes and facilitating class communications between instructors and students, and among the students themselves. Some universities use off-the-shelf LMS such as Blackboard and Desire2Learn while others use independently developed campus-based LMS. Compared with U.S. institutions, graduate HRD programs of South Korea seem to use more technology-mediated communication channels such as smartphone applications and social network-based communication methods for both class administration and instructional purposes.

## Professional Organizations of HRD in South Korea

While there are two major organizations facilitating HRD research in the United States (the Academy of HRD and the International Society for Performance Improvement), there are four academically oriented professional organizations and one joint HRD professional organization in South Korea: The KAHRD, the KSTD, the KSLP, the ACEK, and the KJAHRD. Here we will describe the history, goals and purposes, and services and activities of each organization of South Korea.

### *Korean HRD Professional Organizations*

The KAHRD was founded in 1997 by the research community group of Korea University (KAHRD, 2013). Since then, KAHRD has evolved into one of the largest professional organizations of HRD in South Korea with its current 8th presidential position. The main purpose of the organization is to contribute to the community of Korean HRD through its leadership facilitating various research activities to advance HRD theory and practices, thereby leading innovation and performance improvement for Korean society. In pursuing this purpose, KAHRD provides various services and activities such as semiannual research conferences, a KAHRD sponsored journal (*Korean Human Resource Development Quarterly*), joint academic consortiums for research with other professional HRD organizations, quarterly newsletters introducing new HRD trends and research issues for its members, as well as holding quarterly HRD forums to present recent HRD research studies conducted by new HRD scholars and to facilitate collaborative research activities among its members.

The KSTD was founded in 1989 by the faculty and research community group of Hanyang University with the intention to facilitate vocational education and lifelong learning research and practices for Korean workplaces (KSTD, 2013). One unique aspect of this organization is that the presidential position has alternated between faculty members in academic institutions and chief learning officers in private sector organizations. Its primary goal is to facilitate academic and research activities to improve industrial, vocation, and social education in South Korean society and promote lively communication and collaboration channels for its members to contribute to the theory building of HRD discipline in South Korea. Since its inception, KSTD has held an annual conference for its members and practitioners of private sector organizations and publishes a journal (*The Korean Journal of Training and Development*).

The KSLP was founded in 1997 and originated from the faculty and student group at the Seoul National University (KSLP, 2013). The purpose of the organization is to contribute to the development of the theory and practice of corporate education through research endeavors. The goals of KSLP are to continuously seek solutions to create human resource value for corporations and develop HRD theory and methodologies to increase the level of workforce competencies to world-class levels. KSLP also publishes a journal for its members (*Korean Journal of Corporate Education*). Lastly, members of KSLP are composed of both HRD and instructional systems faculty and students producing a distinct research environment to incorporate theories and practices in both fields.

The ACEK organization is unique as its foundation was the Korean corporation Daewoo, which sponsored the launching of the association in 1995 (ACEK, 2013). Similar to other HRD professional organizations in South Korea, ACEK was initiated by the faculty group of Yonsei University located in Seoul, Korea. ACEK's purpose is geared toward the development and facilitation of research and academic activities for educators of adult learners. It specifically emphasizes the development of learning and research communities pursuing a passion for research and people. ACEK has provided various services and activities for its members such as annual conferences, research forums, journal publication, collaborative research, and field trip activities with foreign adult education organizations.

The KJAHRD is a collaborative entity comprised of three organizations (The KAHRD, the KSTD, and the KSLP) and seeks to integrate the independent effort of each organization and pursue synergy to improve HRD research and practice for South Korean society (KJAHRD, 2013). Jointly founded in 2006, its primary purpose is to enhance general quality of HRD research activities and practices in South Korea, so all members can share similar research interests through joint conferences while enjoying more opportunities to compare divergent views about HRD research and practices among the different organizations.

### *Comparison of the South Korean HRD Professional Organizations*

Review of the five organizations reveals several comparative characteristics inherent to South Korean HRD professional organizations. First, they were founded by the faculty/student group or community of the four different academic institutions in South Korea. It is believed that founding faculty groups for each organization possessed similar academic orientations such as vocational education, adult education, HRD, and corporate education. However, this type of independent shaping of HRD communities in South Korea tends to create a divergent environment for HRD research and practice. Ultimately, researchers and practitioners of HRD in South Korea entertain differing views of HRD theories and methodologies and have suffered from a lack of resources and support from members or from external sponsors while growing into a larger size organization. Lastly, establishing a joint association of HRD through the cooperative efforts among the three major Korean HRD associations is an encouraging phenomenon as all constituting members can benefit from the collaborative research activities while each organization reduces the burden of holding an organizational conference independently. Overall, the Korean phenomenon of the continuing evolution of HRD communities is an exemplary case of national HRD development acting as a benchmark for HRD associations in other countries.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

Korea is considered a highly dynamic society as the nation is surrounded by powerful countries such as China and Japan (Song, 1990). To compete with the two large countries and confronting continuous threats from North Korea, the national and organizational culture of public and private sectors in South Korea has evolved to be very

competitive and adaptive, allowing for quick responses to cope with rapid and abrupt changes (J.-H. Kim, 2005). This kind of national environment has shaped and influenced the current status of the HRD field in South Korea. A review of the history of HRD systems in other Asian countries indicates that the pattern and development of HRD programs in South Korea are different from those of China and India in that South Korean organizations and companies have been in close collaborative partnerships with U.S. organizations as the nation has experienced rapid economic growth in the past several decades (Roberts et al., 2014). In the private sector organizations of South Korea, organizational structures, policies, cultures, and work processes are very similar to those of U.S. organizations.

While internal and external environments at organizational and societal levels have been influential in the formation of the current shape of HRD in South Korea, it should be noted that core HRD theories, research activities, and practices also affect the people, public and private organizations, and various communities of HRD in South Korea. The influential role of HRD research and practices on South Korean organizations, communities, and society has been augmented by two national and cultural characteristics. First, many big companies and public organizations with large HRD structures and departments are located around the Seoul metropolitan area. Similarly, most prestigious universities with large graduate HRD programs are also located there. Because of this, HRD professional and practitioners in private firms and public organizations have been provided with ample opportunities to learn and practice HRD theories and practical approaches to address various work and performance issues stemming from their tasks, and at the same time, advance their career paths through these programs. They have had abundant access to research and collaborative projects with HRD associations and faculty members at universities in the Seoul metropolitan area. This centralized HRD environment has facilitated very active and cooperative relationships between the clients and providers of HRD programs, products, and services. However, to achieve a more geographically balanced development for the entire nation, it is our recommendation that there should be orchestrated efforts among governmental policy makers, institutional researchers of the HRD field, and organizational decision makers and practitioners of HRD to construct a national entity to research and collaborate on decision making of future developmental plans for HRD programs, national structures, and communities. This proposed collaborative entity will actively facilitate more diverse ideas and creative intervention methods to satisfy the national needs of HRD.

Second, as South Korean society is rapidly aging, lifelong learning is a key social issue driving various educational and human development efforts for the society as a whole (Jung, 2011). Adult education has received increased attention reflecting this societal trend. The discipline and field of HRD play a pivotal role at the center of this national trend. As a consequence, the profession and academic HRD programs have experienced exponential growth over the last several decades (Bae et al., 2011; M. K. Kim & Na, 2012). Even though it may be argued that the fields of lifelong learning, adult education, and HRD are different and should be separate, these fields share a common focus on developing people, communities, and society. Therefore, it is our

recommendation that South Korea should wisely and selectively intertwine these fields to maximize the combined effectiveness while minimizing the overlapping resources and expenses of independent investment in each field.

In our knowledge-based society, the competitiveness of a nation depends on the competency and quality of its people (Kang & Lee, 2000). For the future development of graduate HRD programs in South Korea, two trends will influence the ways that HRD programs can respond to the changing nature of workplace needs. First, like many high-income countries such as Japan and countries in the EU, South Korea is and will continue to experience a very slow economic development as it enters the developed nation category (Roberts et al., 2014). Considering the low birthrate and aging population of South Korea, a strategic approach to the national HRD system is required to satisfy its future workforce needs. This trend will influence the future direction, program modification, and content of graduate HRD programs of the nation. Second, the impact of technological advancement on various societal, cultural, educational, political, and economic systems in South Korea will be highly noticeable (Lim, Yoon, & Park, 2009). For example, communication and information technology has been a key driver of radical change in the way people work, communicate, learn, and collaborate with others in workplaces and schools. Accordingly, the rapid technological change will significantly influence the future shape of national HRD systems, institutional HRD programs, and the content areas of graduate HRD programs. In response to this trend, it is strongly recommended that graduate HRD programs in South Korea proactively develop more integrative courses combining the theories, practices, and tools used in technological fields with HRD, thereby expanding the scope of HRD to facilitate the development of its people and the nation as a whole.

Regarding the teaching and learning context of the graduate HRD programs in the United States and South Korea, both countries share similar characteristics in academic features but differ in areas such as the number of faculty, dual system of graduate HRD programs, and the level of technology integration in teaching and learning. Our findings indicate that South Korean institutions have relatively fewer faculty to maintain similar size graduate HRD programs. For example, South Korean graduate HRD programs have an average of 1.85 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty while U.S. graduate HRD programs have an average of 3.92 FTE faculty (Roberts, 2012). Considering the dual nature of master's-level degree program offerings (regular and professional degree programs), faculty workload for teaching and student advising is much higher in South Korea. With such faculty workload, high quality and innovative educational experiences, service, and support for the graduate students are difficult to provide consistently. Unless increases in faculty size relative to the student enrollments are allowed within South Korean academic settings, creative and indirect ways need to be implemented, such as utilization of adjunct and residence faculty resources, external advising systems for career counseling of graduate students by HRD professionals, and joint advising systems with other department faculty for doctoral dissertations.

When comparing the characteristics of graduate HRD program in the United States and South Korea, several distinct differences were observed. First, the number of

institutions offering graduate HRD programs is different. In South Korea, there are 26 graduate HRD programs offered in 14 institutions while there are 112 graduate HRD programs offered in 105 institutions in the United States (Roberts, 2012). Second, even though the number of graduate HRD programs in South Korea is small, South Korean graduate HRD programs provide a great number of HRD content areas (135 topics) in their curricula. Furthermore, there are similarities and differences in HRD content areas offered by the graduate HRD programs in both countries. For example, common topics offered by graduate HRD programs in both countries were adult learning theories, evaluation, instructional systems design, and foundation of HRD. The graduate HRD programs of South Korea offered more content in e-learning design and development, program planning and development, and training and development whereas those in the United States offered organization development, leadership and management development, and organizational behavior. Table 5 lists content areas covered in the U.S. graduate HRD programs (Lim et al., 2013) in comparison with those covered in South Korea programs.

## **Limitations and Future Study**

Our study has several limitations. First, the primary focus of our study is descriptive with a broad perspective to provide an overview of the current status of the HRD field and graduate HRD programs in South Korea. Our study lacks analytical findings that might reveal in-depth description and explanation of focused aspects of the HRD field and graduate HRD programs in South Korea. Future study is recommended to use more theoretical and/or analytical approaches to investigate specific HRD themes in South Korea.

In terms of a direction for future research, several additional areas should be explored. First, due to the relative lack of research on HRD programs offered in Asian countries, comparative studies should be conducted to identify similarities and differences of graduate HRD program characteristics among Asian countries such as China, Japan, India, and Taiwan. In doing so, detailed academic and curriculum characteristics (e.g., the process of academic admission, degree requirements, faculty information, core content areas, etc.) should be compared and analyzed. Second, as the economic conditions, social structure, political systems, and spiritual and philosophical orientation of Asian nations are varied, thorough analysis of how these factors influence the theory and practices of HRD systems would be very beneficial in understanding how HRD is conceptualized in each nation.

In conclusion, in addressing the primary purpose of current research to assess the status and development of HRD programs in South Korea, this study presented a brief history of the development of graduate HRD programs in South Korea. In detail, this study identified the academic characteristics, curricular content, and teaching and learning context of the graduate HRD programs of South Korea. Also, the roles of professional HRD organizations in supporting the development of graduate HRD programs and the HRD community in South Korea was discussed. We believe the findings of this research contribute to the global community of HRD scholars by utilizing the research findings to conduct comparative research on graduate HRD programs and

**Table 5.** Top 30 Content Areas Covered in the United States and South Korean Graduate HRD Programs.

U.S. institutions	f (%)	Korean institutions	f (%)
Adult learning theories (adult learner/ education/theories/practice)	49 (49)	Introduction to HRD	15 (100)
Evaluation	41 (41)	Quantitative research	14 (93)
Organization/workforce development	39 (39)	Adult learning theories	11 (73)
Instructional design	37 (37)	Theories/principles of HRD	11 (73)
Leadership/management development	30 (30)	E-learning design and development	11 (73)
Instructional strategies and methods	29 (29)	Evaluation	10 (67)
Introduction to HRD	28 (28)	Training and development	10 (67)
Quantitative research	27 (27)	Instructional design	9 (60)
Management and administration of instructional programs and systems	23 (23)	Program planning and development	9 (60)
Organization/workforce theory/behavior	22 (22)	Career development	8 (53)
Training and development	22 (22)	Leadership/management development	8 (53)
Ethics/legal issues in HRD	21 (21)	Instructional media and development	8 (53)
HRD consulting	21 (21)	Information technology/system	8 (53)
Human resource management	21 (21)	Organization/workforce development	6 (40)
Teams/group dynamics	20 (20)	Psychological/Sociological dimensions in HRD	6 (40)
Diversity/multicultural HRD	19 (19)	Research foundation	6 (40)
Change management	18 (18)	Therapy/counseling	5 (33)
Needs/performance analysis	18 (18)	Instructional strategy, methods, and delivery	5 (33)
Program planning and development	16 (16)	Needs/performance analysis	5 (33)
Theories/principles/practice/learning of HRD	16 (16)	Organizational learning/learning organization	5 (33)
Work and life issue	15 (15)	Distance learning	5 (33)
Instructional technology	14 (14)	Strategic HRD	5 (33)
HRD Trends/Issues	14 (14)	Ethics/legal issues in HRD	4 (27)
Management of HRD	13 (13)	HRD consulting	4 (27)
Organizational learning/learning organization	13 (13)	Diversity/multicultural HRD	4 (27)
Career development	12 (12)	Action learning/research	4 (27)
Organization/workforce analysis	12 (12)	International HRD	4 (27)
Principles of business/industry/management	12 (12)	Professional development of HRD professionals	4 (27)
Qualitative research	12 (12)	HRD Trends/Issues	3 (20)
Instructional media and development	11 (11)	Management of HRD	3 (20)

Note. Adapted from Lim, Song, Choi, and Kim (2013). HRD = human resource development.

curricular matters between countries and improve the international program features of their graduate HRD programs.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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