

# The Engaged Leader-Scholar Bridging Knowledge Creation and Social Impact

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**Citation:** Johnson S A (2025) The Engaged Leader-Scholar Bridging Knowledge Creation and Social Impact. *Int. J. Health Sci. Biomed.* 2(6):1-2.

**Received Date:** 2025-11-2, **Accepted Date:** 2025-11-19, **Published Date:** 2025-11-28

## Introduction

### The Engaged Leader-Scholar: Bridging Knowledge Creation and Social Impact

In traditional academia, researchers are typically well-educated experts who dedicate their lives to a specialized corner of scholarly work, becoming masters or specialists in that small corner [1]. The Oxford English Dictionary [2]. Defines scholar as "a person who knows a lot about a particular subject because they have studied it in detail." This is a very traditional view of the scholar. Having been an academic and a healthcare professional, knowledge from studying does not automatically convert or translate to knowledge, proficiency, and expertise. Studying alone without application and direct experience does not culminate in producing a true scholar or expert. I would like to challenge that thinking by having us define scholars from a broader perspective. In terms of the leader scholar, having strong expertise in a single area would come at the detriment of organizations and people that they lead. True leaders tend to have a range of skills that span across many areas. Let us view the scholar's discussion in terms of the leader scholar.

### Leader Scholar

Though possessing extensive knowledge in a specific field, leader-scholars also have an overall understanding of leadership principles. They possess formal education, expertise in a profession, and have been engaged in continuous research and development. Their vision enables them to set up and guide, inspire people to follow, and motivate people towards the accomplishment of common goals. The leader scholar bridges the gap between applied and theoretical knowledge. The distinction between a general leader and a leader-scholar is in terms of commitment to continuous learning and dissemination of knowledge through action research and

continuous improvement in communities. These communities are stakeholders in an organization and outside their vocation, and members of the community who are recipients of knowledge sharing.

### Who is Our Audience?

Scholars publish to share their work as a part of professional service and lifelong learning. HEI publication requirements put academics under pressure to stay current with the literature and aim to prevent the duplication of what has already been done, being the focus, but instead finding and filling gaps in knowledge, which is a professional requirement for the continued growth of scientific knowledge. Continuing scholarship builds a scholarly community that encourages innovation and grows our knowledge base, ultimately leading us to enhance our professional practice.

As academics, our audience should extend beyond our immediate field; we must have cross-disciplinary collaboration to have relevant work. As a health care and education professional, I hope my writing and results help shape policy and practice. The practice that we engage in can be used to inform policy decisions that will benefit families and communities on regional, national, and global levels. We must keep our audience in mind and provide new information that can potentially shape current best practices.

When leader-scholars write and distribute their work, their audience should be broader. Yes, leader-scholars work to inform professional peers in journal articles and abstracts geared towards working professionals and students in formal learning courses. However, the goal is to share with a broader audience by publishing in more widely available publications such as magazines, non-academic websites, social media platforms, and blogs. This strategy provides relevant information to those who may otherwise be deprived of access to academic journals, which are too costly for many and unknown to the lay public.

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## **Scholarly Dissemination for Capacity Building and Inclusion**

In the United States today, there is a growing perception that higher education lacks value. This devaluation can be attributed to several factors, one is the widespread lack of understanding regarding the tangible and impactful outcomes of attending and engaging with higher education institution scholars [3]. Historically, HEIs have prioritized and rewarded publishing in scholarly journals, particularly those journals with high impact factors. However, this focus on scholarly publications only often leads to a phenomenon where scholars are essentially "preaching to the choir," failing to disseminate valuable information to the broader public, who also need access to this valuable knowledge. Such limiting practices hinder higher education institutions from fulfilling their responsibility to empower individuals, communities, and society. Moreover, the tendency to communicate exclusively within academic circles and to utilize formats that are not easily digestible by people without college degrees creates an impression of exclusivity and elitism. This approach not only alienates potential learners but also undermines the mission of higher education to foster inclusivity and accessibility in knowledge sharing.

## **Conclusion**

The role of scholars in society today extends far beyond the confines of higher education institutes and publications that cater to professional scholars. The concept of the "leader scholar" supports the need to apply knowledge in beneficial ways to stimulate and inspire individuals.

Broadening the definition of scholarship to include leadership and community service will enable a higher-level solution to the impending higher education challenges at hand. The current perception that higher education lacks value is a challenge that can be met by fostering a culture of inclusivity and promoting accessible information dissemination. Scholars must strive to reach out to a pluralistic audience, sharing their knowledge among academics and the public. This approach will enhance professional practice and result in practical policy reforms that benefit society at various levels. By embracing a more expansive definition of scholarship, we can reclaim the mission of higher education and reassert its significant role in society.

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