

HRD Viewpoints

The International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research: the Story so Far ...

Bob Morton and Jim Stewart

The genesis of this journal has a long history both within the University Forum for HRD (UFHRD) and the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO). For UFHRD it can be traced back to the establishment of the journal Human Resource Development International (HRDI). And so a brief summary of the history of that journal is a necessary starting point.

HRDI was conceived by Professor Monica Lee who was a founding member of the UFHRD. Monica's vision was of a journal which facilitated interaction and cross fertilisation of knowledge, ideas and research between the academic and professional communities in human resource development. Her vision found favour with a publishing company. Since Monica knew that her vision of joining research and practice was shared by the UFHRD her approach to the Forum for sponsorship of the then proposed journal was warmly received and endorsed. The same was true of an approach to the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) and so the proposal was for the journal to be sponsored by AHRD, UFHRD and, through the latter, by Eurosform. HRDI was launched in 1998 with Monica Lee as the founding Editor in Chief. Monica and her editorial team developed a number of then innovative features in the first couple of volumes. These were designed to realize the shared ambition of editors and sponsors of connecting theory and practice; an ambition best expressed in the aims set for the journal;

Human Resource Development International promotes all aspects of practice and research that explore issues of individual, group and organisational learning and performance. In adopting this perspective Human Resource Development International is committed to questioning the divide between practice and theory; between the practitioner and the academic; and between traditional and experimental methodological approaches.

As one example of how this vision was to be achieved, the journal had two 'Perspectives' sections to encourage and accommodate non-refereed contributions. The thinking was that academics would generally value and so prefer to submit peer reviewed articles, which are part of the currency of academic careers, while HRD professionals would naturally prefer not to go through the peer review process as speed of publication would be valued more. But, while these might be general truths, the editors of HRDI also wished to encourage joint submissions from academics and professionals as both peer reviewed and non-reviewed contributions. However, and despite the original vision and aims for the journal being pursued by Monica and successor Editors in Chief, HRDI has not been as successful in meeting the vision and aims as originally intended and expected. This was clear to the UFHRD by the eleventh Volume of HRDI in 2008. And so at about that time the Forum decided to investigate the possibility of creating and sponsoring a new journal which could focus more directly on promoting contributions from HRD professionals and provide content more directly focused on professional practice.

From 2008 to 2015 may seem a long time to launch a new journal, and no doubt it is longer than usual. But, as a voluntary network the UFHRD relies on the grace and favour of the staff of its member institutions to get work done. At the onset of initiating a new journal the Forum benefited from the committed efforts of just one such person who progressed the idea to the point of a favourable response from a potential publisher. Unfortunately, and as is often the case, that person's work circumstances changed with the effect that no further progress was made and the idea lay fallow for a few years. However and fortunately in 2014 Dr Jan Myers, aided by Dr Mark Loon, provided the resource needed to resurrect the idea and between them provided some renewed impetus. By that time though the staff in the publishers who had shown initial interest had also moved on and so Jan and Mark had to start again from scratch. Their initial analysis of the market also showed significant changes in the landscape of publishing, especially academic publishing. Some of these changes; for example on open access; are driven by the UK processes of what is known as dual funding for academic research. One part of the 'dual funding' is based on research quality in universities as determined by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). And so launching a new journal with any form of academic foundation or content is a more complicated matter in 2014/2015 than it was in 1998 or would have been even in 2008. Fortunately this is the point when the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO) enter the story.

IFTDO and UFHRD had enjoyed a mutually beneficial though informal relationship for a number of years. This had been facilitated in part through the various roles of Professor Jim McGoldrick who is President of the UFHRD and was for a time a Vice President of the UK Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The CIPD is a member of both the UFHRD and IFTDO. Through Jim's contact with Bob Morton, recently Chair of IFTDO Board (and now IFTDO Treasurer), and also Chair of the CIPD Enterprises Ltd Board, a more formal relationship was established between the two organisations in 2012 through the establishment of a Joint Scientific Committee. Another item of serendipity was the appointment by IFTDO of Dr Rick Holden as Editor of their newsletter. Rick is a long standing stalwart of the UFHRD and an experienced editor of academic journals and his expertise enabled the discussion of a joint journal to progress to a concrete proposal.

From the perspective of IFTDO the idea of an IFTDO Journal arose from a strategic review of IFTDO's activities in 2009. Bob Morton and his fellow board members, Ray Bonar and Carol Panza had recognized the opportunity for IFTDO to harness its practitioner base and forge a link to academia which would help IFTDO meet its purpose of developing HRD knowledge and practice globally. However after initial exploration of the concept, it was clear that the expertise and resources to develop a stand-alone IFTDO Journal were not available from IFTDO's largely practitioner base. IFTDO recognized it needed to develop stronger links to academia and a basis on which to generate and contribute content for a journal. A first step towards this was the creation of IFTDO's Global HRD Awards. The award categories were extended in 2011 to include a Research category and this enabled stronger links to UFHRD who through Jim McGoldrick provided the judging criteria and expertise for the research category. The success of this new category provided a springboard for detailed discussions with the Joint Scientific Committee about a joint UFHRD/ IFTDO Journal. The proposal and initial funding was approved by the IFTDO Board and Rick Holden has played a major role in moving the joint journal from concept to reality.

And so this journal has finally been born. It has had a long gestation but no doubt has and will continue to benefit from that. All directly involved in realising the joint ambition of UFHRD

and IFTDO are to be thanked and congratulated, but especially Jan Myers, Mark Loon and Rick Holden. As the UFHRD is a body mainly, but not exclusively composed of academic institutions and IFTDO is a body mainly, but not exclusively composed of professional institutions, the shared belief in the value of bridging the so called theory/practice divide will surely be applied in this journal. The two organisations have already demonstrated the possibility and value of working together and we are both confident that this journal will continue to reap and demonstrate that value.

The Authors

Bob Morton has a long association with IFTDO. He is the current Treasurer and has previously been President and Chair. He is Chair of CIPD Enterprises Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the CIPD and represents CIPD as President of EAPM (European Association of People Management). His consultancy, ODHRM Consultants Ltd, involves Bob working with a range of companies, worldwide, including BASF, Petronas, Tata and others. Until recently Bob was Vice Chair of Bristol University's Governing Council and Chair of its Human Resources and Health & Safety Committee.

Professor Jim Stewart is one of the principal founders of the UFHRD. He is currently acting Chair of the Forum and has been Chair and Executive Secretary. He has held professorships at Nottingham Trent University and Leeds Metropolitan University and is currently Professor of HRD at Coventry University. He is the author of several HRD books including *Employee Development Practice* (1999, FT Pitman Publishing) and *Learning and Talent Development* (with Rigg, C., 2011, CIPD).