

Editorial

I have a saying posted above my desk which says “Anything worth doing is going to take longer than you think”. This first issue of *The International Journal of HRD Practice Policy and Research* has provided a perfect example! It has indeed been some time in gestation and I commend you to the short article by Bob Morton and Jim Stewart, in the HRD Viewpoint section, for a fuller account of how the partnership between IFTDO and UFHRD has finally brought the Journal to fruition. I want to focus in this editorial on the rationale for and the direction of the Journal. Let me begin with a short story of my own. I began my career in HR (or personnel management as it was then) with Cadburys, the world famous chocolate makers. An early posting was to the production night shift. Myself and another new graduate nervously attended our first production meeting before the shift commenced. Asked to introduce ourselves my colleague, perhaps naively in retrospect, chirped up with “I’m an Arts graduate from Bristol”. The production manager, a tough no-nonsense bloke, who’d worked at Cadburys since before I was born, nearly choked with laughter but managed to proclaim “So what are you going to do paint the bloody place?!” Over the years since I often find myself thinking about this. It seems to me to capture a tension between the worlds of academia and practice; a sense of competing realities combined with unease and nervousness about how a synergistic relationship might be realised. I sensed it repeatedly during my long career with Leeds Met University, teaching professional HRD students. I sensed their difficulty with theory, with research, yet at the same time saw in some of their assignment work valuable contributions to both theory and practice, which were destined to be read by no more than a handful of other academics. A very recent reminder of such questions occurred when listening to Aidan Lawrence, Learning & Development Director for Hewlett Packard, Ireland. He presented a passionate ‘business case’ for an enhanced relationship between HRD research and practice at a recent UFHRD Conference. Aidan argued the need for a strengthening of research practice collaboration, seeing academia and practice as strategic partners in practice-research-practice learning cycles.

The rationale for the Journal is firmly located in such a discourse yet clarity about the implications — what will it look like — will take time to emerge. One of my Editorial Board colleagues, Jamie Callahan, puts it nicely when she says we are “crafting a new language” because we have nothing that adequately addresses this ground. She suggests the tension I speak of above is best described as a continuum. A continuum from scholar, through to scholar-practitioner (scholar who practices), practitioner-scholar (practitioner who engages in scholarship), scholarly practitioner (practitioner who is interested in and uses scholarly work to inform their practice but doesn’t do the research themselves), and finally to practitioners. We have excellent journals that speak the language of the first two; and there are excellent trade journals that speak to the last one. We want to accomplish the challenging task of speaking to the middle three, while hoping to move more practitioners to become scholarly practitioners. This “crafting of a language” that speaks to those populations, Jamie notes “is work in progress ... and our first issue reflects that condition”.

Let me at this point introduce this first issue. Bob Hamlin’s passion for evidence based HRD is ably illustrated in the lead article. Indeed, I have described his contribution to others as an evidence based article about evidence based HRD! So, hopefully a good start in dispelling myths and doubts about the potential of academic practice partnerships in developing our understanding of HRD and its impact. Academic practice partnership is also a feature of the second article, where Jeff Gold explores how the leadership of organizations (one private sector one public) have sought to take a new and inclusive approach to the ‘old chestnut’ of culture change. The clue is use in the title of the

word “Re-connecting”. It is an account of practice which argues how leaders can ‘re-discover’ their organizations and use this as basis for learning to lead organizational change. The Journal is the international journal of HRD practice, policy and research. Erica Smith draws on her research with the International Labour Organization and a number of Australian companies to address policy principles in terms of managing apprenticeship. This serves as an excellent article in its own right but also one enables me to flag the importance we are placing on such policy reflections as a feature of the Journal. Whether principally ‘national HRD’ focused (skills, graduates, qualifications) or issues regarding ‘corporate HRD’ strategy both have important place in the Journal’s coverage. From Australia, the latter three articles take us to Oman, Saudi Arabia and then back to the UK. Paul Turner and Alison Glaister, together with their Omani colleague Rayya Al-Amri, focus on what must be one of the most talked about HRD practices in current times - talent management. In the context of Omanisation (a challenging HRD policy in its own right) the authors apply a talent management evolution matrix to assess practice in two key sectors of the Omani economy. Whether Roland Yeo and his colleagues are best described as ‘practitioner scholars’ or ‘scholar practitioners’ may be a debateable point. What is encouraging is that Saudi Aramco were happy for Roland and his colleagues to write up their work on team-based knowledge sharing in the business. Again, the clue to the value of their paper is in the sub-title: “Learning through complex work challenges”. The authors are ‘insider researchers’, tackling HRD processes that can unlock knowledge and understanding about work problems through team learning. The final article in this first issue takes us into world of the UKs national health service. Adam Turner, a practitioner within the NHS, and Lynn Nichol, his ‘academic’ partner explore development assessment centres. But, interestingly, their focus is the voice of the participant of such HRD interventions. The insights generated have challenging implications for HRD policy and practice.

An HRD Viewpoints section follows these substantive contributions. It is a space where we hope to encourage dialogue and debate about HRD, through a variety of shorter contributions. It might be a short practice review on how a new initiative has been developed / implemented; a view on a proposed or recently implemented national HRD policy or a reflection on the development of HRD as a function and/or a profession. In this first issue Sophie Mills and Amanda Lee look back on their — at times very challenging — research project on comparative global HRD practice. A final contribution asks tough questions about HRD’s role in a world of work dominated by robotics and automation.

A final word about the Editorial Board and the Editorial Advisory Board. The former is responsible for the overall management of the Journal, reporting to the Journal’s governing body on overall progress and development. The latter adds professional integrity and standing to the Journal and act as advisers to the Editorial Board on matters of Journal development, the two boards, together, represent an excellent cross section of HRD interest around the world. I thank them for their support to date and look forward to working with them as we ‘craft the language’ of the new Journal and seek to establish its credentials.

HRD is not going to stand still — it is a shifting landscape. The Journal has a role in reflecting how HRD is developing but also in influencing its development. Anyone who views him/ herself as an HRD professional has a contribution to make to this Journal. So, I conclude with a warm invitation to all readers to help the Journal meet its aspirations.

Dr Rick Holden, Editor in Chief