'Let the role begin': Advancing Perspectives Section for *HRDI*

Dr Stefanos Nachmias, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham Business School, UK

I am delighted to be part of the editorial board for *HRDI* and work on the Perspectives section of the journal. I am thankful to the editorial team for the chance to make a positive contribution to the journal. For years, I have been actively engaged with *HRDI* as a reader, scholar and reviewer but this is the first time as an Associate Editor. Most importantly, this is my first editorial! For some, this is considered to be a great milestone in their academic career, which is partly true, but I see this role more as an opportunity to learn, develop and create the space to further advance HRD research and practice. I have taken over this role from Rajashi Ghosh who has done a great job in advancing the Perspectives section for the journal. In fact, I took some inspiration from Rajashi's vision for the Perspectives section when producing this editorial. While I was reading her work, I soon realised that this role is mainly about addressing daunting questions and challenging the status-quo in theory and practice (Ghosh, 2016). I fully support this view and I intend to carry on Rajashi's work in raising the academic debate and contributing to the advance of HRD practice.

Before I explain my vision as a new Associate Editor for the Perspectives section, I would like to share with the journal's readers my feelings when I first took over the role. You might ask why here, why now, but I believe that the first initial days of the role have shaped my mind-set as to how I can positively contribute to the journal over the next three years. Apprehension, anxiety, desire and determination were just few of the emotions I went through during the first few days. This might sounds familiar; I am sure many people have experienced a rollercoaster of emotions when starting a new role. However, this ride has helped me to realise that being an Associate Editor is about assessing, evaluating and questioning human behaviour and emotions. After all, *HRDI* is the right forum for debate and exploration of the interdisciplinary field of HRD.

The rollercoaster of emotions also generated some positive action, as I was able to spend time assessing how I can channel my passion for change and learning within the Perspectives section, how I can foster change through research and practice and, most importantly, how I can contribute to current debates around HRD. These questions might not come as a surprise to some; I believe that we are at a crossroad as to how HRD can influence practice and help organisations to prosper and grow in times of great uncertainty. As Callahan (2007) argued in her work, trying to predict the future of HRD is like 'gazing into a crystal ball, any clouded images that you think you might see are open to interpretation' (p.77). I agree with this statement as academics still try to predict the future without taking effective actions to address current issues in the workplace. Therefore, I will not try to predict the future with this editorial but I plan to use this 'crystal ball' to explain how I intend to facilitate individuals to generate new understanding, new knowledge and how to use this 'solid globe glass' to accommodate different options, perspectives and arguments in an attempt to improve people's lives. I believe open interpretation can generate healthy, constructive and much needed, quality debates on HRD practice and research. The world is very uncertain but this can bring great opportunities for us to ensure that the Perspectives section will captures current changes/trends at

individual, organisational and social levels. In fact, we have the moral and academic responsibility to respond to current challenges and try to produce research with impact.

I also feel lucky. While I was attending the Annual Academy of Human Resource Development conference in Louisville, Kentucky, I had a constructive conversation with an experienced colleague about the current HRD status, issues to address and the role of organisational context in research. This conversation offered me additional reassurances that being 'apprehensive' is actually what we need right now to further advance and question HRD practice. I also realised that there is still room to capture the complexities that have emerged from HRD in modern organisations. I hope that I will be able to briefly explain how I intend to work with the Editorial team and colleagues across the globe to advance the *HRDI* Perspectives section over the next three years. I hope many people from different walks of life will join us on this journey to record current best practices, review books, introduce new techniques/framework, assess changes in society and produce influential case studies for both individuals and society as a whole. I would like to invite readers to make varied contributions to the Perspectives section in *HRDI* on any of the key areas highlighted below:

- **Diversity and equality and how HRD supports organisational differences.** I know diversity and equality sometimes bring anxiety to people. It is a very complex issue, however, inequality affects millions of people across the globe. With dramatic demographic changes in the labour market and additional pressures to enhance organisational competitiveness, organisations have been 'forced' to take positive actions which promotes visible and non-visible differences. Addressing equality and diversity issues encourages the establishment of positive employment relationships in less predictable work roles and working life and the ability to translate diversity policies into improved performance. So, we need to utilise current growing pressure for organisations on diversity to recast organisational attitudes and make real and sustained progress towards addressing discrimination in the workplace. We need to acknowledge that changes in employment relations, social stigmas, cultural differences, organisational realities and demographic changes put pressure on organisations across the globe to not just consider these challenges, but to also make significant changes in the way they manage and treat people. Thus, the Perspectives section encourages individuals to submit work on how HRD champions diversity and equality in the workplace, and how organisations (regardless of the size) promote visible and non-visible differences. As Burrell (2016) suggested in her report 'reality is a lot messier', hence we need to stimulate a positive debate around key diversity issues related to work and welfare. Therefore, I welcome any contributions that make this messy reality clearer to organisations and individuals.

- **Trusts, fairness and organisational values.** Over recent years, we have noticed that there is a trust deficit towards organisational practices, leadership attitude and management actions. High level of leadership mistrust is generated due to poor understanding of organisational realities and ineffective decision-making processes on how employees fulfil organisational duties. Changes in values and social morals have also attributed to the lack of trust in the workplace and 'uncertainty' becomes the

new norm in the workplace. We need to break this 'cycle of normality' by raising awareness on how HRD assists the development of effective and sustainable leadership practices, assess what are employees' perceptions of current organisational practices, how HRD can help organisations to achieve CSR and ethical goals, and how global trends on the labour market, immigration and cross-cultural differences affects leadership behaviour. The *HRDI* Perspectives section welcomes any contribution that attempts to address Lee's (2015:13) fundamental questions on HRD: 'Where does HRD stand on issues of cultural imperialism – particularly in relation to migrant workers or satellite organisations? How transparent are the organisational processes? To what extent are ethical codes really followed?'

- **Digital revolutions and quality of work:** Digital economy becomes increasingly important for the global economy, especially in times of economic uncertainty. Technology has been used as a policy-making tool to establish practices aiming to foster business competitiveness, increase productivity and reduce costs. However, the digitalisation of the workplace has brought a number of challenges for organisations to address like skills profile, work dynamics, resources and security. Probably the most serious challenge is the digitalisation of job as predications shows that 47% of jobs will be replaced by technology over the near future (Frey and Osborn 2016). In this fast-paced, globalised world, we need to capture how organisations create the space for employees to connect, collaborate, and innovate in the workplace. We need to record best practices on how organisations attempt to engage employees and the role of HRD in facilitating the digital revolution across the globe. This is crucial as managers, as well as employees, lack appropriate digital skills to manage technological changes, identify training needs and support the workforce. Therefore, we welcome contributions that provide answers to these questions and contribute further to the current debate on the HRD needs for the digital economy, and how learning can be applied in the workplace. *HRDI* is the right place for individuals to leverage knowledge, capabilities, adaptability and efficiency in this changing labour market.

- **Emerging economies and HRD needs:** There is a need to explore further the role of HRD amongst the emerging economies, especially in Asia and South America. Emerging economies are crucial to the growth strategies of many organisations across the globe, so the Perspectives section provides the right platform for scholars and practitioners to produce research that will enable us to understand further the strategic importance of HRD in economic development, leadership needs, talent management practices and learning development. Further to that, we welcome contributions that further explore the effect of emigration of highly trained or qualified people across the world and assess key HRD issues amongst the emerging economies and the social issues emerged from national HRD policies.

The above points are just few areas that I believe are highly topical in the HRD arena and warrant the need to explore in more detail the impact on individuals, organisations and society as a whole. Contributions are welcomed from practitioners, academics, policy makers and any individuals who have an interest in advancing this agenda, within the scope of the journal. Please get in touch to share your ideas and discuss further the prospects of writing a piece of work for

the *HRDI* Perspectives section. The non-referral aspect of the Perspectives provides a unique and powerful platform for individuals to challenge the 'status quo', present new thinking and disseminate best practices. As Jessica Li (2019) highlighted in her first editorial as HRDI Editor-in-Chief 'the Perspectives section to offer a launching pad for scholars and practitioners to try out and advance their radical and pioneer ideas and theories' (Lee, 2019:3). This is an invaluable resource that can have a real impact on current practice and thinking. Reflecting on the 'crystal ball' argument, the scope is to use the shininess of this ball to draw our attention to interesting HRD topics and ideas from different parts of the globe. Awareness brings change. Change brings opportunities. Opportunities generate knowledge. I am delighted that I will be working with Jessica and Rajashi to further advance *HRDI* in the future. Please email me on stefanos.nachmias@ntu.ac.uk if you have any questions, and I hope to see a number of you at the UFHRD2019 conference in June.

References
- Burrell, L. (2016) We Just Can't Handle Diversity. https://hbr.org/2016/07/we-just-cant-handle-diversity Accessed 05 March 2019.
- Callahan, J.L. (2007) Gazing into the crystal ball: Critical HRD as a future of research in the field. *Human Resource Development International*, 10(1); 77-82.
- Frey, C. B. and Osborne, M. (2016). Technology at Work v2.0: The Future Is Not What It Used to Be. Oxford Martin School and Citi. http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/publications/view/2092 Accessed 05 March 2019.
- Ghosh, R. (2016) Vision for HRDI Perspectives. *Human Resource Development International*, 19(2); 95-97.
- Lee M.M. (2013) 'The History, Status and Future of HRD' in The Routledge Companion to Human Resource Development (Eds) Poell, R., Rocco, T and Roth, G, Routledge, pp3-12.