Guest Editorial

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

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1. Introduction

Organisational Change and Development (OCD) is currently a focus of attention among academics and practitioners across the world. Global issues and trends such as privatization, public sector reform, mergers and acquisitions, the influence of MNCs, population migration, poverty, and advances in ICT, present major challenges to those charged with equipping people and organizations to adapt and flourish in these turbulent times. Given these challenges, it is natural for managers and academics throughout the world to search for information as to how best to manage OCD. It is notable that, in recent years, the scope of organizational change literature has rapidly expanded, reflecting this clear existent need to push back the parameters of knowledge and understanding surrounding OCD theory and practice. There is now wide-scale recognition that effective OCD practice is inextricably associated with organizational performance (Meyer and Stensaker 2006) and this recognition has created a hunger for theories, models, training and, arguably, answers as to how best to manage OCD processes in different settings.

Yet, paradoxically, these advances in the body of knowledge on OCD have also unearthed numerous contradictions surrounding issues such as: the aims of OCD; power and the ownership of change interventions; the ethics of organizational change; value clashes across national cultures; the transfer of OCD theories and practices across national boundaries; the role of internal and external change management consultants; and the evaluation of OCD interventions from multi-stakeholder perspectives. This complexity of OCD draws attention to the multi-disciplinary nature of organizational change; OCD is inevitably tied to a range of subjects such as economics, sociology, anthropology, strategic management and marketing, psychology, logistics, political reform, international development, and human resource management. Hence, in some ways, OCD research and literature as an integrating mechanism brings together ideas and theories from across a range of academic fields. For example, there is a body of OCD literature that approaches OCD primarily from a psychological perspective, and places an emphasis on variables such as personality, attitudes, and emotions (for example, see Liu and Per-

rewé 2006; Oreg 2006). Another line of enquiry has sought to explore the links between broader societal change and change processes within the organization (for example, see Alas 2007; Alas and Rees 2006). Yet another line of OCD enquiry has focused on the ways in which change management practices vary in different national settings (for example, see Zhou *et al.* 2006; Piotrowski and Armstrong 2005). While such varying emphases may be frustrating for people who, as mentioned above, are seeking answers and solutions about how to manage OCD (see Dufour and Steane 2006), the breadth of the field may also be considered a healthy sign in that our understanding of OCD processes has to incorporate a wide range of perspectives and different levels of analyses.

2. The papers

This special edition of the *Journal of Business Economics and Management* does indeed explore the subject of OCD from varying perspectives. Initial versions of all of the papers included in this special edition were first presented at the 2nd EIASM conference on organizational change and development that was held in Lithuania in October 2007. The conference attracted delegates from many countries including Norway, Finland, Denmark, Romania, Russia, UK, France, USA, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates. The richness of the contributions offered by the conference participants is reflected in the papers that were selected for inclusion in the special edition.

The papers by Shirokova and Knakto, and Jurkštienė *et al.* explore aspects of OCD with regard to the owners of organizations and other stakeholders. Both papers raise and discuss issues surrounding the extent to which owners and stakeholders affect key aspects of organisational change processes. Yusof and Aziz's conceptual paper highlights the importance of forecasting in strategic adaptation activities and the authors make a significant contribution to the literature by presenting a strategic framework for researchers. The papers by Jumponnen *et al.,* Rees and Althakhri, and Timoshenko all highlight the importance of contextual variables on OCD practice. Thus, the paper by Jumponnen *et al.* provides a fascinating insight into Russian man-

agers' views about their organizations strengths and weaknesses and the main external threats and opportunies that their organizations faced over several years. Similarly, Rees and Althakhri explore organizational change and development in the Arab region with reference to influence of contextual variables such as Islam and tribalism. Timoshenko's paper examines the extent to which new public sector ideology in Russia has actually influenced accounting practices in the Higher Education sector in Russia. The papers by Bogdanova, and Kumpikaitė and Čiarnienė both explore recent developments that have the potential to equip organizations and people to better cope within organizations. Bogdanova's paper examines the topical subject of cross-national mentoring in the NGO sector while Kumpikaitė and Čiarnienė's paper investigates the extent to which Lithuanian organizations have actually embraced new technology in their training and development activities. The final paper, offered by Ogrean *et al.,* is a thoughtful contribution that draws attention to the role of ethics in organizational change; the authors call for ethics to be emphasised at the organizational level in order to address corruption issues that often negate the potential benefits of globalization.

3. Thanks and acknowledgements

This special edition has been made possible only by the valuable contributions that were willingly provided by a group of friends and colleagues; I wish to record my thanks to them all. First, on behalf of the organizing committee of the 2nd EIASM conference (that is, Professor Ruth Alas, Professor Vincent Edwards and myself) **I would like to express our deep gratitude to Professor Manuela Tvaronavičienė and her colleagues at *Vilnius Gediminas Technical University* for hosting the event in such a hospitable and organized way; we are truly in your debt.** Second, I would like to thank all of the delegates for their inputs to the conference; in many cases, the papers in this special edition were improved and refined as a result of the discussions and feedback that took place at the conference. Third, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who freely gave of their time in order to provide detailed feedback on earlier versions of these papers.

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