Editorial

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Biographical notes: Ali K. Kamrani is an Associate Professor of Industrial Engineering and the Founding Director of the Design and Free Form Fabrication Laboratory at the University of Houston. He received his BS in Electrical Engineering in 1984, Master of Engineering in Electrical Engineering in 1985, Master of Engineering in Computer Science and Engineering Mathematics in 1987 and PhD in Industrial Engineering in 1991, all from the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. His research has been motivated by the fundamental application of systems engineering and its application in advanced design and complex systems. He is a licensed Professional Engineer for the State of Texas.

Organisational learning (OL) has become an important topic in today's corporate climate. A company's competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on the level of OL. Organisations are forced to use many learning methods to improve their performance. While the price of investing in learning may be high, it is generally accepted that the price of repeating old practices that lead to failures are much higher. Identifying and developing core competencies and ensuring OL have become strategic imperatives in most global companies. OL is based on routine. Work routines are the basis for organisational memory. These routines make up organisational networks and processes. It is best to define OL in terms of identifying and creating best-practice work routines, standardising these practices, diffusing them throughout the organisation, and then renewing the process. OL also means developing improvement routines, specific routines for bringing about change. The human capital of a specific project can be represented as the reflection of human repositories of information and knowledge related to the project and their potential use. From a behavioural perspective, OL is about changing organisational behaviour for collective improved performance. The essence of corporate learning with project management lies in the ability of the organisation to continually improve its processes and systems with every project that is undertaken. A debate still exists of whether an organisation can actually learn or if only an individual person can learn. Requirements for effective OL is an open culture no one feels threatened to expose their opinions or beliefs; a culture where individuals can engage in higher levels of learning, questioning the underlying organisational norms, basic assumptions and beliefs and not remain constrained by existing norms. The goal of this special issue is to address and publish the latest articles on a variety of topics related to OL.

In the first article entitled, '*The use of blogs as organisational learning tools within project-based environments*', Baxter, Connolly and Stansfield set out to examine the suitability of blogs as OL tools within project-based organisations. Three distinct yet

interrelated issues are discussed. These are the applicability of blogs as a potential learning tool within project-based organisations, the association between blogs and the concept of OL is clarified and finally the question of whether blogs have the means to allow an organisation to transform itself into a learning organisation is assessed. In her article entitled, '*Sub-cultures as leverage for organisational learning and lean thinking*', Karlin considers the role of sub-cultures as it addresses one step of a project to create, validate and use experimentally an indicator that captures the level of OL for multiple levels of the organisational culture without the members of the organisation repeatedly completing the instrument. In their article entitled, '*From bureaucratic forms towards team-based knowledge work systems: implications for human resource management*', Erhardt, Martin-Rios and Way outline key knowledge processes including knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and team learning. A team-based HRM system is demarcated that aims to foster knowledge work. Four key HR practices are discussed including knowledge staffing, knowledge-based performance management, fostering of shared leadership and trust building. In the fourth article entitled, '*Seeking the robust core of organisational learning theory*', Wallis, draws on a sample of 12 recent papers as samples of normal science and exemplars of our present level of scholarship to conduct a propositional analysis of the structure of OLT. This analysis identifies the core of OLT. His paper creates a benchmark for the progress of OLT and suggests opportunities for advancing our understanding of OLT. '*Organisational learning at the public-private sector interface*' is the title of the fifth article by Juriado. The findings of his study highlight the importance of internal learning within the public sector rather than learning across sector boundaries. Also, the public sector context requires transparency and equal treatment towards all stakeholders, which complicates learning. López-Nicolás is the author of the sixth article entitled '*Determining the impact of organisational culture on organisational learning*'. This paper investigates the influence of organisational culture on OL. Four cultures are diagnosed: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market. Empirical evidenced is collected from a sample of around 300 Spanish companies. Differences are found in the impact of the four types of organisational culture on the various processes for knowledge creation. The final article is by Mupepi and is entitled, '*The nature of a schematic description of a socially constructed organisational competency model (CCM)*'. This paper advances a dialogue on a co-constructed performance management model referred to as the CCM. The CCM is an alternative strategy designed to make an organisation effective. Arguments are drawn that indicate that competency models, in particular those concerned with organisational capabilities, are relatively ineffective when developed outside the organisation. The last section of this issue includes a technical note provided by Daneshgari, entitled, '*Learning based product and service development*'. He discusses the application and importance of learning-based approach to design of any system as a way of increasing the success of the project.