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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Peter A. Murray is an Associate Professor in Business at the University of Southern Queensland. He is currently Australian Editor for the journal 'Management Decision' and is a regular reviewer for the *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Human Resource Management Journal* and the *Journal of Industrial Relations*. His most recent work has been published in high quality journals including *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Management Learning*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* and *Supply Chain Management*.

Bruce Millett is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business, University of Southern Queensland. His research and publications reflect his fields of interest including strategic management, organisational change and development, organisational behaviour, human resource management and organisational learning. He has been involved as an author of a number of top selling books and has conducted seminars and workshops for Queensland Police, Queensland Health and for Private Sector organisations in the Dairy and Manufacturing Sector. He also teaches in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and China in the areas of strategic management and organisational behaviour and is actively involved in higher degree research supervision.

Jawad Syed has widely written on issues related to business and HRM in leading international journals and research volumes. He has co-edited two books with Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin, namely *Managing Cultural Diversity in Asia: A Research Companion* (Edward Elgar, 2010), *Managing Gender Diversity in Asia: A Research Companion* (Edward Elgar, 2010). He is currently editing a text book, with Professor Robin Kramar, namely *Human Resource Management in a Global Context: A Critical Approach* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). In August 2010, he co-founded and became a member of the first Working Group of the South Asian Academy of Management (SAAM), a professional association for scholars dedicated to creating and disseminating knowledge about management and organisations in South Asia.

The idea for this special issue began with the goal of closing the theory to practice gap between change and learning. What makes the ontology of organisational change in respect of practice difficult to determine is that many theories of change are based on meta-models of change events and ideas meaning it is difficult for practitioners to link broad change concepts to practical ideas. Practitioners might consider punctuated equilibrium as an interesting idea based on radical change but difficult to implement because of the nuances between time, space, and context which is different from one organisation to the next and from one industry to another. For instance, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) piece of radical change points to the difficulty in implementing sudden bursts of change. Yet, Larry Greiner's (1998) foundational paper on the developmental phases of change however seems to have set the scene for much subsequent research over the years that addresses similar and complimentary approaches. That is, the evolution and revolution of organisations over time and the individuals that guide them are fundamentally driven by past experiences and events. One corollary of this was research by Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) who found that while the punctuated equilibrium model was in the foreground of academic interest, it was more likely in the background of the experience of many firms because of the need to change continuously. Many ideas and techniques for change were highlighted in this paper perhaps setting the scene for closing the gap between theory and practice.

Specifically, the research by Brown and Eisenhardt illustrated that more techniques for developing learning behaviour(s) (although not discussed in this way) were fundamental for change. In the call for papers for this special issue, the editors wanted to build on this idea that learning behaviour and learning culture is arguably at the vanguard of change since behaviours for change are rarely conceived in a single event but have to be learned and forged over time. Conceptually, Greiner's notion that individual behaviour for change is based on past events and experiences is one way to think about change. Many others are discussed in this special issue. For instance, behavioural change can be constructed by following some pre-existing rationale such as Kotter's change steps. Alternatively, learning organisation techniques are systematic attempts to change individuals' behaviour across the organisation to underpin a culture of change. Ideologies and mental models or views of the world (Hedberg, 1981) are fundamental to change. At different levels in the organisation, change approaches are mostly different since methodologies, meta-models, techniques and some practices of change more suitable at one level will not be at the next. The need to link learning behaviour and change processes including organisational design (OD) techniques has never been greater or more urgent. At a time when organisations are calling for clear performance parameters related to measuring change, and/or measuring learning behaviour, managers lack specificity and knowledge about how to integrate key areas. This special issue attempts to address many of these gaps.

First, the paper by Doren Chadee, Retha Wiesner and Banjo Roxos examines how environmental sustainability (ES) and change management is achieved within the context of small manufacturing enterprises. The discussion explores how SMEs use an iterative and reflective cycle of learning to bring about change. The main thesis for the paper is that SMEs involved in environmental change management benefit from adopting the principles of a learning organisation. For environmental sustainability change to be successful, the research finds that LO characteristics and ES change techniques are mutually reinforcing. Importantly, the legacy of Brown and Eisenhardt's work is noticeable in this paper to the extent that SMEs are expected to benefit from a continuous

change approach to ES. The latter can be invoked especially in times when SMEs need to embark on quite major ES change. While much work has examined larger ES change processes, very little research has examined these processes within SMEs. Accordingly, the research finds that SMES are able to be more flexible since they are not burdened by multiple decision points and processes.

The second paper by Deborah Blackman and Monica Kennedy seeks to address the gap between change and learning in higher educational change. As the authors suggest, the failure rates for change are high and members of higher educational institutions are no less resistant to the forces for change than other industries. Significantly, the paper addresses why Australian academics are significantly less satisfied with institutional leadership than other organisations. In drawing from the idea that meta-models of change for model behaviour are often commonly adopted, the paper describes situations in which change behaviour was not immediately successful. With respect to mental models and participant's disposition towards change, it was found that there were many instances and opportunities for doubting the leader's statements and intentions of change. In this highly creative paper, the authors devise a useful organisational learning model in an attempt to unravel the role of doubting in subverting the potential for learning and that to achieve change, leaders may need to change the people to achieve change outcomes.

The third paper is a review of some very interesting and often competing literatures in strategy, learning and change. The review seeks to explore the various nuances and relationships between these complex ontology's and Reneé Malan does this very well. Several propositions support the paper. They are based on the idea that strategic thinking forms the basis of mental models. In order to develop different kinds of strategies, create learning behaviour and bring about change, individuals rely almost entirely on shared frames of reference or mental models. These models are common to the main streams of research in the three stated ontologies. In existing research, ontological interrelationships have not been adequately explored or explained. Accordingly, a model is proposed as a way forward to explore common relationships in subsequent research. As an example, organisational learning provides the basis for new strategies to be created. Individuals learn from past experiences but also shared mental models across groups. Importantly, the paper illustrates how shared mental models provide frameworks for strategic thinking which enables strategies to be created and change to occur. This is a valuable review for researchers interested in related fields of research.

The fourth paper by Geoffrey R. Chapman, Kathryn J. Hayes, Terry Sloan and Janna Anneke Fitzgerald illustrates how innovation, organisational change and individual learning methodologies can be supported by effective communication with three distinct and different occupational sub-cultures: operator, engineer and executive. Based on previous research by Schein (1996), occupational sub-cultures are defined as differences that exist in the organisational culture between broad job types within organisations. The paper explores the role of communication styles in change management across the three sub-cultures by using a well-known profiling tool called Instinctive Drives System<sup>®</sup>. This tool was developed to help people identify their innate characteristics which enable them to understand their internal motivations at work. The paper explores a potentially important gap by identifying, understanding and accommodating the innate predispositions of individuals in an effort to maximise the success of change programmes. Using a sample of 3943 individuals, the paper found clear evidence of Schein's executive, operator, and engineer's sub-groups. Specifically, the results were able to show that executives are more likely to be driven towards flexibility, variety, and innovative environment whereas

engineers and operators were driven towards environments with logic and certainty. This paper is a novel attempt to use a profiling tool to help managers understand the innate drives of individuals and how knowledge of these will be preferred over common cultural assumptions applied to different occupational sub-cultures.

The fifth paper by Peter A. Murray and Bruce Millett focuses on the important of developing learning cultures to improve the level of adaptability in team performance with a particular focus on semi-autonomous teams. The authors highlight a number of research gaps related to team learning common to these team types. First, the authors illustrate how team learning has been conceived of in terms of a composition model where what individuals learn is derived from the sum of team member contributions. They then discuss that what individuals learn is most likely attributed to a compilation model of a continuous series of socialisation and dyadic role negotiations and that these behaviours are forged from different kinds of learning. While existing research has examined team adaptability, the authors illustrate an important gap between adaptability on the one hand and types of learning that contribute to the composition of team learning on the other. The paper explores how the level of adaptability across teams is influenced by the quality of team member learning. Accordingly, the key premise of the paper is that a more emergent approach to learning will better equip the team to deal with specific types of contexts that semi-autonomous teams face across the organisation including conflict, leadership and knowledge.

The final paper is by David M. Gray and is based on the learned experiences of students and the challenges of delivering a marketing capstone course at a major Australian University. To achieve the goals of developing engaged and global citizens that are able to display critical and analytical thinking as well as problem solving and research capability, the paper describes the processes used in implementing a simulation game called Markstrat. The latter is particularly well known to scholars in the field but few empirical results have been collected that explore the gap between stated unit goals versus learned experiences as a result of using the simulation. The paper found that student expertise during the assessment period was significantly improved and the results were found to be significantly statistically different from each other at the 0.01 confidence level. The results found support for the view that the simulation enabled students to support team building, demonstrate critical thinking related to strategy and better see the results of their actions by applying theory to practice.

### *Final commentary*

The editors would like to thank very much each of our contributors. It is important to note that each paper was rigorously put through a double blind review process and as a result, only the best papers emerged from this process. We think the special issue has addressed many of the goals we set out to achieve, namely, to bridge the gap between learning and change and to bring to light important research ideas, theories, and practices. If you have other specific inquiries related to the special issue, please contact the corresponding editor by email: [peter.murray@usq.edu.au](mailto:peter.murray@usq.edu.au). Finally, we hope you enjoy the papers in this special issue.

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