
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Tojo Thatchenkery is a Professor and the Director of the Organisation Development and Knowledge Management Program at the Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia, USA. He is also a Doctoral Faculty at Fielding Graduate University and a member of the NTL Institute of Applied Behavior Science and the Taos Institute. He is the author of several books and articles on organisational change and social constructionist thinking (<http://www.appreciativeintelligence.com>). He has consulted with many international organisations, including Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, American Red Cross, IBM, Alcatel-Lucent, General Mills, 3M, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and Tata Consulting Services (India).

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Human capital is unarguably one of the most valuable resources for all types of organisations. While the strategic advantage of attracting and retaining human capital is well documented for the information and communication technology sector, companies in manufacturing, service and healthcare sectors also need employees who can think outside the box to create competitive advantage and sustainable growth. Sector specificities and subject matter-based knowledge have become much diffused during the last several years. As more and more knowledge become freely available, what could be claimed as proprietary is becoming more accessible than ever before. In such a fast changing and technology driven environment, what are the new approaches that might help generate a sustainable supply of human capital?

Almost half of the articles in this special issue propose the notion that language use or discourses play a key role in generating strategic knowledge through the best use of human capital. In the first contribution in that group – ‘Hindering appreciative intelligence[®] and follower sensemaking through hostile leadership’, Tamera R. Enalls-Fenner focuses on the concept of Appreciative Intelligence[®], the ability to reframe and see the positive possibilities in situations and to act on them. She points out that stress is on the rise within the workplace thanks to the expectation for improved and faster service in every situation. While the customers or end-users benefit from improved services or products, the human costs within the organisation that produced the efficiencies are very high. A form of ‘toxic leadership’ may emerge hindering the ability of the followers to make sense of the stress and to reframe the situation. Enalls-Fenner found that a toxic organisational climate had an overall oppressive power, diminishing the abilities of those who were inclined to reframe and create positive synergy.

Tuomas Holma, Hanna Lehtimäki and Tojo Thatchenkery in the next article titled ‘Positive approaches to enhance customer-focused knowledge sharing culture in a financial services organisation’ examine the use of appreciative sharing of knowledge (ASK) approach for creating and sustaining a customer-focused organisation development culture in one of the largest financial services companies in Finland. The positive approach to creating a knowledge sharing culture effectively addressed the resistance to change process embedded in the OD intervention. The paper shows how to use the ASK methodology to bring out the core values and knowledge enablers that would enhance knowledge sharing. Using individual and group interviews the authors collected and analysed data for generating actionable recommendations at the individual, group, and organisational level. At the individual level, the capacity to reframe to see the positive, a component of Appreciative Intelligence[®], was important. As an example of using the appreciative inquiry as a knowledge management tool, the case study illuminates the power of the positive in generating sustainable pragmatic business practices.

In the next paper, ‘Conducting appreciative inquiry in the virtual world’, Debora Elam and Kristine Brands point out that technology allows the bypassing of physical boundary limitations to expand access to critical information in fields such as education and medicine. Their paper shares the learning from two case studies that applied Thatchenkery’s ASK model. They have also included best practices for researchers and consulting practitioners in order to effectively utilise information technology and identified additional factors for future research. The next article by Drew Wolf and Bruce Hanson, ‘The resilience of appreciative inquiry allies: business education sustains the business community’ espouses the potential of positive approaches to sustain change among high uncertainty and dynamic complexity. They show how

some businesses have developed resilient cultures as an appreciative approach to help stakeholders reframe and see positive possibilities. The case study done by business school students by collaboratively working with businesses points to the untapped potential to build on resilience and positivity in challenging times.

In 'Approaches to enhancing communication between healthcare providers and recipients', Muhsine Itir Ozgen and Tojo Thatchenkery explore how a multinational pharmaceutical company supported a project to improve communication between doctors and patients in one of the largest research and training hospitals in Istanbul, Turkey. The hospital doctors volunteered to be part of this project and it was carried out as a hospital-consultant partnership. The doctors were invited to participate in a customised effective communication training program, and the dynamics of doctor-patient communication in the hospital setting was addressed by using surveys at the individual level. The pharmaceuticals executives and the doctors were later interviewed on the outcomes of the project as a follow-up. Findings suggest that a good doctor-patient communication climate will generate useful feedback regarding the real effectiveness of their drugs. In the next paper, 'Integrated reporting and its impact on organisational change', Kazunori Ito and Masaki Iijima show that integrated reporting (IR) can be used by companies to describe a series of value creation processes and for bringing about organisational change while ensuring sustainability. Using IR-based interview data analysis, the authors researched possibilities of organisational change from Japanese and Australian firms.

In 'Managing for results: the US Coast Guard Marine Safety program', Fred L. Ames shares the learning from the introduction of performance-based program management systems to the US federal government. He examined performance management issues through a longitudinal qualitative case study of a regulatory program dealing with marine safety and found that in practice there were two diametrically contrasting approaches to US federal government performance management. One was a top-down methodology for standard compliance while the other was based on voluntarism to improve decision-making. Ames found that the first approach was unsustainable and unsuitable to manage complex federal government programs while the second one led to far more effective outcomes than the first.

In 'Innovation, resiliency and transformation: leveraging the strength of older marginalised women', Pamela R. Kennebrew brings out the often forgotten fact that many older marginalised women experience economic oppression even when employed. She found that such women fight back the economic oppression through innovation, resistance, and resiliency. Using a multidimensional research study Kennebrew found that African-American women over 50 years in age possess a wealth of knowledge that has been ignored for a long time. During the study, older African Americans described the strategies they pursued to overcome economic oppression and thereby create change in their lives and communities. Using the mindful strength consciousness (MSC) theory, Kennebrew demonstrated the highly functional and resilient Black women's point of view.

In the next paper, 'Preparing for transformational change: a framework for assessing organisational change readiness', Gayla S. Napier, David J. Amborski and Victoria Pesek explore the intricacies of genuinely assessing organisational change readiness before an enterprise-wide system transformation intervention in a state-wide public sector entity. They showed that preparation of staff ahead of disruptive technology implementation

provided a unique opportunity by providing stakeholders with insightful data regarding organisation dynamics. The next article deals with the role of emotions in organisation change. In 'Leading with emotional labour: the interplay of six emotions', Finnish scholars Eeva Aromaa and Outi-Maaria Palo-oja explore how emotional labour may enhance employee task completion. By analysing an 11-minute video-recorded conversation between a leader and his staff in a small service company, they brought out the various ways a leader can enact emotional labour for positive purposes. Their detailed micro-analysis of a series of vignettes from the meeting provided new insights regarding the dynamic nature of emotional labour in typical leadership situations.

The last article in this special issue explores the controversial field of whistleblowing. In 'Betrayal of local government whistleblowers: expecting rights and resources, facing harsh realities', Rebecca Stafford examined the experiences of public leader whistleblowers of county government agencies who were targets of employer retaliation, and who experienced posttraumatic growth. As pointed out in many studies and news media, in highly politicised government agencies, whistleblowers are vulnerable to retaliatory action that often results in job loss and financial ruin. Stafford interviewed 11 public sector whistleblowers and captured in rich detail their traumatic experiences and their efforts to cope. She found that the organisational procedures and policies intended to protect whistleblowers did not work and that there was an alarming lack of resources outside their organisations to help them restore their lives. Eventually, all respondents overcame adversity and embarked on positive psychological growth.

The papers in this special issue shed new insights for appreciating the importance of creating the right approaches for securing and nurturing human capital for sustainable growth. We thank Editor-in-Chief Dr. Mohammed Dorgham for giving us this opportunity to guest edit the special issue. We also appreciate the timely assistance of Liz Harris, journal manager, *Inderscience* throughout the editorial process.