

EDITORIAL

Diana Rus

Creative Peas, The Netherlands

d.rus@creative-peas.com

This Special Issue of EWOP In-Practice focuses on workplace innovation (WPI). Over the past few decades, workplace innovation has come to be widely adopted across countries and industries, given its potential to help organizations generate value while simultaneously creating the necessary conditions for employees to be involved in improving the quality of working life. Indeed, within certain circles of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, workplace innovation has come to be seen as key in helping organizations nimbly adapt to the challenges presented by a turbulent world.

Workplace innovation has been studied and practiced through the lens of multiple disciplines, such as management, sociology, economics, policy-making and work and organizational psychology. This interdisciplinary focus has resulted in a variety of different conceptualizations of WPI, which, on the one hand, could enrich our knowledge of WPI, whereas on the other hand, they could potentially create misunderstandings for practitioners interested in implementing WPI in their organizations. Whereas the definitions of WPI differ substantially, there seems to be agreement regarding the potential effects of WPI, namely improved organizational performance and improved quality of working life. Surprisingly, Work and Organizational Psychologists have largely stayed away from discussions surrounding WPI, although they could contribute enormously to an understanding of the factors surrounding the effects of WPI on organizational performance and quality of working life.

Therefore, the aim of this Special Issue on workplace innovation, is two-fold: a) to provide a platform for researchers and practitioners to showcase research and organizational practices on WPI; and b) to discuss and debate the role of Work and Organizational Psychologists in promoting the application of WPI. Given the large number of high quality submissions we received to our call, we have decided to divide the Special Issue into two volumes, both to be published in 2017. Volume 2 will be forthcoming in November, 2017. Below, I will provide a short overview of the articles included in Volume 1 of this Special Issue on Workplace Innovation.

The six articles included in Volume 1 of this Special Issue represent a multi-disciplinary collection that combines theory, empirical research and practice. As such, the articles draw on a variety of disciplines (e.g., work and organizational psychology, sociology), showcase a range of different types of contributions (e.g., reviews, empirical papers based on survey research, international case studies, practical design approaches, opinion pieces) and settings (e.g., various European countries).

We open with a fascinating paper, by **Arianna Costantini**, **Riccardo Sartori** and **Andrea Ceschi**, who present an overview of recent studies on WPI from a work and organizational psychology perspective and discuss the advantages of taking such a perspective on WPI. After examining the intersections between work and organizational psychology and WPI, they show how three critical concepts, namely, job autonomy, job flexibility, and participation in organizational life, can have an effect on WPI outcomes, such as, quality of working life and

organizational performance. The authors conclude with some practical implications for Work and Organizational Psychologists interested in WPI implementation.

Next, we continue with an excellent opinion piece by **Maria Karanika-Murray** and **Peter Oeij**. They argue that the expertise of Work and Organizational Psychologists is greatly underused in WPI practice. By taking an integrative, critical approach, they discuss the potential role that they could play to strengthen the practice of WPI. To this end, the authors propose a multidisciplinary, integrative perspective on WPI that takes into account the interplay between strategy, structure, and culture. Moreover, they outline paths in which WPI practice can benefit from knowledge generated in the field of work and organizational psychology as well as how Work and Organizational Psychologists can broaden their focus to provide a unique contribution to WPI practice.

We follow with a piece by **Pierre Van Amelsvoort** and **Geert Van Hootegem** who present a coherent set of design approaches aimed at creating a framework for stakeholders interested in redesigning organizations for WPI. They start from a sociotechnical design perspective for the design of core work processes, which they subsequently broaden by including other approaches, such as Lean Thinking, Total Productive Maintenance, and Human Resource Management theories, to address issues related to the design of control, coordination and support systems. They conclude with outlining an avenue towards combining these approaches to develop a systemic concept of Total Workplace Innovation (TWIN).

The following three contributions stem from a larger team of researchers commissioned by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) to conduct research on why and how companies apply WPI across Europe in order to offer recommendations to European policy makers on how to stimulate WPI. They all rely on data from a large-scale, multiple case study on WPI implementation among 51 companies across 10 European Union countries.

Peter Oeij, Steven Dhondt, Rita Žiauberytė-Jakštienė, Antonio Corral and **Paul Preenen** present empirical evidence on why, how and with what effects, companies implement WPI based on the Eurofound study. They show that successful WPI implementation results from an interplay between management-driven business goals and employee-driven quality of work goals. In addition, they find that, whereas, companies take different paths in implementing WPI, one key success factor for WPI is constructive cooperation between management, employees and employee representatives. They conclude that a systemic approach focusing on the interplay between strategy, structure, and culture is most likely to lead to successful WPI implementation.

We continue with an essay by **Fietje Vaas, Rita Žiauberytė-Jakštienė** and **Peter Oeij** who argue that practitioners interested in implementing WPI can benefit from being exposed to case examples of WPI best practices as a supplement to more abstract definitions of WPI. Based on international cases from the Eurofound study, the authors develop three criteria for a case to be a good example for practical purposes: a) the company should have implemented substantial WPI practices, b) the case description should provide actionable information, and c) the narrative should be inspiring. The authors underscore their argument by providing numerous and lively WPI case descriptions.

Last but not least, **Peter Totterdill** and **Rosemary Exton**, present three case studies from the UK showcasing the role of enterprise leadership for successful WPI implementation. Whereas the three case studies outline journeys towards WPI from different starting points, all three demonstrate how a consistent approach to shared leadership can stimulate employee

empowerment and bottom-up initiative, which, in turn, lead to successful WPI interventions. The authors highlight the importance of taking a systemic approach, a focus on long-term, small incremental changes as well as consistent values and leader behaviours for WPI success.

We hope this collection of articles on workplace innovation will stimulate your interest in the topic and your thinking about its potential application to your own practice. Volume 2 of this Special Issue will present a few more interesting cases and practical tools aimed at the implementation of workplace innovation.

Best wishes for the upcoming summer. We look forward to seeing you at the EAWOP Congress in Dublin in May, 2017 and bringing you more articles about the application of work and organizational psychology.

Dr. Diana Rus, Editor Special Issue on Workplace Innovation, EWOP In-Practice

Dr. Angela Carter, Co-editor a.carter@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr. Colin Roth, Co-editor colin.roth@blackboxopen.com