

This issue of *Facilities* comprises six research papers and a book review article.

The first paper, written by Hou, Ho, Chung and Wong, is on outsourcing – a key issue in procurement and management of facilities services. Through organising five focus group discussions with participation from 25 facilities managers in Hong Kong, qualitative data including the opinions of the managers were coded for analysis. Issues identified as affecting the services outsourcing are tight budget constraints and absence of strategic planning. Some strategies have been recommended for tackling the two issues, and the feasibility of implementing the strategies is to be tested.

A related paper, which is about a study on the choice between outsourcing and in-house delivery of facilities management services, is contributed by Chileshe, Perera, Mohamed Haneefa, Rameezdeen and Hosseini. Based on a literature review and verifications of the review findings by three semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire was devised for use in a survey. The survey was administered to solicit the opinions of facilities managers in Sri Lanka on outsourcing and in-house services delivery. According to the study findings, strategic services are suitable for in-house delivery while tactical and operational services should be outsourced.

A core competence area of facilities management is workplace planning and management, which is the focus of the third paper, authored by Lee from the USA. The study reported in the paper investigated the characteristics of the physical work environment for promoting creativity for innovative start-up workplaces. Using a content and visual analysis and interviews with professionals including architects, interior designers, facility managers and chief executive officers, it was revealed that the three most important characteristics for companies to produce creative outputs are balanced layout, technology interface for collaboration and spaces for idea generation.

Another paper on workplace issues, contributed by Sandström, Eriksson, Lonka and Nenonen, is based on a study carried out to identify the core dimensions of user experiences in a physical and technologically embedded learning environment. With an integration of the usability of built environments and the inquiry-based Engaging Learning Environment, 10 teacher students in Finland were interviewed semi-structurally. Among the study findings, the physical and embedded learning environments provided the students with sociodigital affordances and the agile physical setting of the environment supported the students and promoted their learning.

Aimed at establishing a people capability framework to promote sustainability in facilities management practices, Sarpin, Yang and Xia conducted a study that made use of a questionnaire survey to solicit opinions of industry practitioners in Australia and Malaysia. Statistical analyses were made on the collected data. Among the 23 people capability factors identified as significant to the promotion of sustainability measures in practice, the top ranked factors include understanding life-cycle cost, understanding the whole-life value concepts and ability to work across disciplines.

A paper of Adewunmi and Ajayi, also centred on professional practice, reports a study investigating the benefits of benchmarking perceived by facilities management professionals in Nigeria. Through holding 34 semi-structured interviews, data were collected and then coded for software analysis. To professionals who perform informal benchmarking, benchmarking tool is helpful to their performance improvement, service

quality improvement and improvement of their processes. While to those with benchmarking performed formally, benchmarking helps them make strategic plans and strive to be the best in the industry.

Project management is one of the necessary core competencies of facilities managers. The final paper, written by Waheed, is a review of a new book *Understanding Project Management: Insights for Successful Project Delivery*. According to the review, the book has a good structure of contents covering a wide spectrum of project management knowledge. It is highly recommended for academics, students as well as project and facilities management professionals.

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