Editorial

Welcome to Issue No. 1 of Volume 10 of the *Journal of Work-Applied Management*; this issue brings together exciting original work focussed on learning in the workplace and especially action learning (AL), action research and reflective practice. I am also delighted to welcome the journal's new Deputy Editor Dr Felicity Kelliher, who has contributed a paper to this issue. I look forward to working closely with Dr Kelliher on the journal's future progression.

The issue opens with Newman's "Transforming self-driven learning using action research", a paper that shares the findings of an action research enquiry adopting auto-ethnographic methods to enable individual reflection on learning practices and habits in professional computing and data science. The data drawn up map changes in learning practices, personal reflective journals and activity logs (using task-tracking software) are also analysed.

The author suggests an incongruity between espoused theory and theory-in-use; suggestions are offered to encourage individuals to become more engaged in the learning process, and ultimately become proponents of continuous learning, equipped to take advantage of emergent and evolving knowledge and skill requirements.

Molineux's viewpoint paper, "Using action research for change in organizations: processes, reflections and outcomes", continues the topic of action research and provides a commentary, together with recommendations, on systemic approaches to designing and implementing change in organizations. Successful change management techniques built upon action research are discussed and related to the experience of utilizing systemic thinking and systems practices.

The author suggests that the use of a systems approach to change, which draws upon relevant systems practices, enables more successful change outcomes and as a consequence of this change management practitioners should consider systemic approaches if they are aiming to enable more successful change implementation. The paper provides some interesting advice for practitioners and researchers in change management by sharing a unique personal experience of systemic change processes.

The next paper, Kelliher and Byrne's "The thinking behind the action (learning): reflections on the design and delivery of an executive management program" investigates AL as an approach to curriculum design and delivery of a two-year part-time executive master's program (facilitated in part through a longitudinal work-based action research project). Program participants were all full-time employees and a mixture of mid- to senior managers operating in both the public and private sectors and business owners.

This paper's findings relate participant and tutor perspectives of the programme design, structure and content, and suggest that the programme allows for significant action – reflection among and cross-pollination of AL perspectives. The early involvement of tutors informed the work-based research project and larger AL programme, and facilitated a matching of research interests between practitioner and tutor. Conclusions include that an action-based model of

knowledge transfer and development offers significant learning benefits to those partaking in an executive development programme.

Our fourth paper is Bravenboer's "The unexpected benefits of reflection: a case study in university business collaboration". This paper continues the issues' focus on reflective practice by presenting a longitudinal overview of the development process and outcomes from a six-year collaboration between a large UK banking group and an English university between 2010 and 2016, to construct and study work-integrated higher education programmes.

The case study argues that the business benefits of reflective practice are demonstrated as capable of helping to sustain effective university – business collaboration, as well as supporting transformative change. Part of the findings has been the unexpected importance of critical reflection as a valued business benefit, with a far reaching impact.

Palm's paper, "Influencing project work: exploring the potentials of participatory research" switches the focus slightly, from the organization to the individual employee and argues that key, defined skills are very important to the successful completion of a job role – in this case a project manager. Healthcare in Sweden is focussed upon as a sector in this debate. Palm investigates key literature to claim that, amongst other factors, managers are far more likely to perform effectively if their personal character fits their work position.

The author suggests that the emotional competences best suited to the project manager role are: goal-oriented, involving and engaging (established research is used to support the argument). The author suggests that despite a great deal of research on projects and project management being published researchers and practitioners are still unsure of how to best advance their project work. This paper investigates the potential advantages of using participatory research in project management, especially within the specific context of healthcare.

Staying with employee characteristics, Ahmad looks at organisational behaviour, within the context of employee retention. His paper "The relationship among job characteristics organizational commitment and employee turnover intentions: a reciprocation perspective" presents a review of the relevant literature in this area and concludes that there is a relationship between employees' welfare and organizational effectiveness, and indeed cites much HR literature as trying to make sense of the relationship between an individual's characteristics and an organization's characteristics, with the presumption that being able to balance these will result in equilibrium. The paper attempts to make sense of the proliferation of foci, types, definitions and measures of organizational and personal commitment and interrogates notions of job satisfaction, internalization, commitment (from both sides), reciprocation, social exchange and psychological contact.

Finally, we have Benuyenah's paper "Making HRM curriculum relevant – a hypothetical practitioners' guide". This paper stays with HR issues and draws upon the author's real-life professional experience to dissect the undergraduate business school curriculum for HRM students, in an attempt to understand why there is so much criticism of graduates when they reach their first jobs, having studied this subject at university. The paper illustrates the changing trends in the field of HR and offers ideas as to why graduates have distinct skills gaps, signalling a mismatch between the HRM curriculum and the real world of HRM.

The paper concludes that the HR curricula must focus more on professional work-based skills, pertinent to the contemporary workplace, as well as re-structuring exam formats to be in line with the skills required in the HR profession.

I hope you enjoy these exciting, original pieces of work and find them useful in your practice. As ever please do get in touch if you would like to discuss your own ideas for publications within the journal. I am happy to consider ideas or abstracts and we are always interested to see new work focussing on the world of work and higher education.

Ruth Helyer