

PREFACE

Volume 21 of *Research in Organization Change and Development* continues the long established tradition of providing a special platform for scholars and practitioners to share new insightful and thought provoking research-based insights. The chapters in the volume represent a commitment to maintaining the high quality of work that many of you have come to expect from this publication. The volume includes chapters by a diverse group of our international colleagues. The themes and topics covered by these authors are as different as their disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. What they have in common is a desire to make organizations more effective in dealing with the increasingly complex and global challenges that we face today.

Some papers in this volume begin by looking backward to understand how our profession and our work in the field of change is itself changing. Other papers explore the role that academics can play in orchestrating change and development via the extensive use of collaborative research approaches or the creation of learning platforms that allow managers to diffuse change via network-based learning mechanisms. The role of the “insider” in collaborative research is explored, as are alternative research methodologies, such as trailing research. From our editorial perspective, one of the best things about editing this annual series is that it forces us to reflect on not only what we know, but on how much we still have to learn about this fascinating field. This year, we are assisted in our task as editors by a new member of our team, Debra A. Noumair, from Columbia University Teachers College. Welcome, Debra!

Our first paper is by Amanda S. Shull, Allan H. Church, and W. Warner Burke. Their work compares today’s OD practitioners’ attitudes to results obtained from a similar study conducted twenty years ago. The authors identify emerging themes, such as the changing focus in OD to business effectiveness, compared to more of a “touchy feely” orientation twenty years ago. Staying with the emerging challenges of the era, Ron Ashkenas, Wes Siegal, and Markus Spiegel ask us to explore the core organizational competence needed by 21st century leaders. Following responses to a survey by 1,400 participants from 10 different organizations, the authors identify modern challenges, including the lack of transparency between units; poor

planning, budgeting, and strategy; and weak management disciplines (unclear communications, decision-making, and demands and priorities). They then propose specific change and development strategies to address these emerging challenges.

Our role as academics, researchers, insider researchers and the evolution of research methodologies continue to occupy our attention. Three chapters explore these issues. Luca Gastaldi and Mariano Corso draw on ten years of extensive work in Italian Observatories – a set of interconnected research centers in Italy that work on thematic and industry based projects – and argue that academics are in one of the best positions to orchestrate interorganizational change and development initiatives. Their contribution extends our existing knowledge of large group interventions, the use of multiple and varied tapestries of collaborative research approaches and the design management and maintenance of network-based learning mechanisms. David Coghlan focuses on the role of the “insider” researcher during change efforts. Specifically, he discusses a method that enables insider inquirers to be more reflexive about their cognitive and perceptual perspectives. He makes the argument that the scholar-practitioners who engage in first, second and third-person modes of inquiry are more likely to generate actionable knowledge that is rigorous, reflective and relevant. Inger G. Stensaker captures an increasingly popular way of conducting research on large-scale organizational change in Norway, which is called “trailing research” and offers it as an alternative to action research. Following a comparison between positivistic research, action research and trailing research, her chapter focuses on three trailing research projects and explores how they help to generate new and rich insights.

Our field continues to draw on knowledge gained from other academic disciplines. Two of the chapters provide relevant examples of this. Andre S. Avramchuk, Michael R. Manning, and Robert A. Carpino examine the topic of compassion in organizations. They challenge our field to pay more attention to how compassion plays instrumental roles in coaching, ad hoc organizing, and producing prosocial behavior during challenging times. The authors offer an ample set of references and roadmaps for novel inquiry into the place of compassion in development and change at work. Darren Good, Bauback Yeganeh, and Robin Yeganeh integrate insights from clinical psychology and propose an executive-based coaching intervention that is based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The authors offer a specific adaptation, “Cognitive Behavioral Executive Coaching (CBEC)” and suggest that it presents a flexible structure that can be used to enhance the coaching process.

The last paper in the volume, by George S. Benson, Michael A. Kimmel and Edward E. Lawler III, examines the reasons why employee involvement (EI) practices have not been adopted more widely. The authors inquire into several explanations why these powerful tools are not used more often, including : (1) employee resistance to EI, (2) leader and managerial support for EI, and (3) the role of sensemaking and narratives in EI implementation.

Together, these chapters make a timely and stimulating collection. As we consider these chapters, we are compelled to reflect not only on our experience as researchers in organizational change and development, but on the values, methods, and stances we take toward this important work. It is our hope, that as you read through Volume 21, you will consider what contributions you might make to advancing the field and to future volumes of this series.

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