

Editorial

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Workplace safety, health and well-being within construction remains high on the agenda for practising designers, regulators, clients, contractors and researchers. Many questions have been asked and many more need to be asked; questions that demand answers as we progress towards a ‘vision zero’/‘prevention through design’ goal. How well do education, training and professional development prepare design professionals in the provision of inherently safe(r) designs? How can research into safety, health and well-being deliver improvements in workers’ conditions and their quality of life? What progress towards achieving vision zero is likely to be brought about from current research across all jurisdictions? And are the ethics reasoning and moral challenges understood around the globe and addressed appropriately in safety, health and well-being research projects? These are just some of the issues addressed in this themed issue. It is our hope that this themed issue will be an invaluable resource to clients, project managers, engineers, construction practitioners, academics, administrators, researchers and project professionals involved in the safe and healthy administration, design, management and delivery of major construction projects.

This issue offers readers the opportunity to sample some of the leading-edge thinking identifying research directions and approaches to construction safety, health and well-being, showcasing the benefits to be felt by workers and society. The papers showcase some aspects of the work undertaken by the researchers who collaborate under the banner of CIBW099, a commission committed to the advancement of safety and health of construction workers. The goal is to deliver the tools necessary to accomplish safety, health and well-being in the workplace, in a viable, human-centred approach that meets the needs of the entire construction community. And in that regard the language in its use and its abuse can have significant impact on progress; a theme addressed in our first two full-length papers. McAleenan and McAleenan (2017) contrast the humanising objectives of construction and engineering with the present day dehumanising language of safety, describing construction and its function as a primary means of humanisation, where all parties to the project are re-imagined as active competent agents in the project. On a related matter, Smith *et al.* (2017) explore the use and defining of terms such as unsafe acts and unsafe conditions, and in assigning the term ‘unsafety’, conclude that ‘[r]ather than being considered as two ends of a single spectrum, they are perhaps instead two artificial constructs...which ha[ve] roots in decisions made either consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or inadvertently’ (Smith *et al.*, 2017: p. 66). Getting the language right for the intended audience is always a challenge to successful uptake of ideas. A country’s involvement with construction safety is influenced by factors like: varying labour forces, shifting

economies, insurance rates, legal ramifications and technological development. Advancing the safety, health and well-being of workers and the society within which we operate is a fundamental aspect of our professional and ethical being. Two papers explore these ideas, first Donkoh and Aboagye-Nimo (2017) explore the role stakeholders have in promoting construction health and safety in Ghana through the public works procurement process; this is followed by Burbridge and Troutbeck’s (2017) critical evaluation of Queensland government’s commitment to a ‘goal of Zero Harm’, where they explore the ‘ethical paradox’ facing designers; that is, that a designer may do everything in their power to prevent death or life-altering injury but that power may well be inadequate as control shifts away for the designer – a dilemma we all wrestle with and a theme alluded to in the final paper (Hayne *et al.*, 2017).

When Rakesh Maharaj, keynote speaker at the CIBW099 2015 conference at Ulster University, Belfast, challenged the delegates to engage with ‘diffusion of innovation’ (Rogers, 2003) he was alerting us to the fact that innovations succeed when opinion leaders support the innovation and that is our challenge in conducting research with impact and relevance to the fore. Vidal (2007: p. 3) said, ‘If what he has written is known only to a few other practitioners, or to enthusiasts then the artist is not only not famous, he is irrelevant to his time...’; in this Vidal inadvertently or deliberately highlighted the importance of and need for research to have relevance and impact on industry, and here is ‘the rub’. Is academia distinct from or a part of the industry? A colleague, Robert Weatherup, refers to Ancient Greece where the Agora, ‘the place of businesses’, was sited close to Academia, ‘the place for educational purposes’, acknowledging the interconnectedness or indeed their interdependence on each other. Whatever the reason, the idea suggests that there should be no separation between those who educate and those who manage. This dilemma often challenges those in academia to ensure that the academic ‘ivory tower’ is a thing of delusion not disillusionment. The work of the academic researcher, then, is to deliver to the rest of the industry solutions or choices, derived though the time allowed to think, contemplate, make sense of today’s many challenges. However, and this I would stress, critical or intelligent thinking is not solely the purview of academia. Those who engage directly in the business (of construction) can equally share in the discourse on and discovery of new and innovative solutions to current problems. In that way the proximity of business to education remains close and perhaps they should remain inextricably linked.

Finally, I would stress to readers and the researchers in CIBW099 that as we read and react to the work presented here we endeavour to produce research that is of use to industry and that we ensure it is not just purely academic.

Promoting the journal at relevant events

This themed issue of the journal is being promoted at the CIBW099 2017 conference, being held in Cape Town South Africa. More details on this and the work of CIBW099 are available at their website: www.cibw099.com.

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