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Editorial

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Editorial

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When Dr Gerry Ayers (2019), delivered his international lecture at East Carolina University commemorating and celebrating the 2019 International Workers' Memorial Day he discussed the morality and the reality behind workplace fatalities, how it impacts the workers, their families and their communities. 'Workers', he posited 'have the intellect and the intelligence to make good, safe and healthy decisions. Their challenge is in having the courage to say, 'No! This process has to stop, there has to be a better way''. And as we go forward that challenge remains with all of us within the construction industry, no matter what role or roles we choose to play. So welcome to this, the second themed edition of *Management, Procurement and Law* to focus on safety, health and well-being, a follow-up to volume 170, issue 2, April 2017 (McAleenan and Smith, 2017), showcasing the importance of disseminating up-to-date research outputs and practices. While that previous themed issue focussed on the practical aspects of planning and designing safer construction, this latest issue considers more the human side of safe construction.

Recently, an Ulster University final-year student wrote, '...a competent Civil Engineer should consider the wellbeing of mankind within their designs, this should be considered in tandem with the concept of Othering...viewing certain people as 'Others' can begin the process of dehumanisation'. Therein lies the ethical challenge for socially responsible engineering. Construction is a people business; yes it involves concrete and steel, timber and glass and a myriad other materials, but at its heart, it is in essence for the people and of the people, so for us, on this Editorial Advisory Panel, addressing issues of management, procurement and law within the civil engineering community we see addressing safety, health and well-being not just as a personal ethical challenge or as a moral act but as a categorical imperative, placed upon us all. Society requires it, our workers deserve it and our hearts and heads support it.

In this issue we have selected a number of papers that cross a range of related challenges including the ethical challenges behind wearable technologies (McAleenan *et al.*, 2019), exploring the personal qualities of supervisors (Talabi *et al.*, 2019), respect for workers in the South African construction industry (Emuze and Mollo, 2019), a study of occupational health and safety practices in Malawi (Simukonda, 2019), finishing with a discussion on

trust and worker engagement (Lawani *et al.*, 2019). But before we discuss those issues, a word about our briefing note, which focusses on the Institution of Civil Engineers' (ICE) Health and Safety Register (Edmonds, 2019). It is of particular importance that ICE leads the way on the delivery of safety, health and well-being competence in the design and in the construction of all civil engineering projects across the globe. As an institution, with a membership that works in many global locations on many projects from the prestigious to the routine, we have an opportunity and an obligation to work to the highest standards, preventing harm in our designs and enhancing lives and livelihoods in their delivery. In fact, the mantra – our designs should be such that they can be built, used, maintained and eventually demolished without harm falling to those who work on them or those who are impacted by them – is one that should remain close to the heart of every civil engineer. Edmonds (2019: p. 91) emphasises this point well in his support for ICE's Health and Safety Register when he says 'The industry now expects civil engineers to be able to provide evidence of their training in [health and safety]' and this is where the Health and Safety Register allows members to demonstrate an enhanced and clearly defined level of competence, linked to the Institution's commitment to demonstrate the achievement and maintenance of the required professional level of health and safety attainment.

The premise behind the paper on the ethics deficit in occupational safety and health (OSH) monitoring technologies (McAleenan *et al.*, 2019) tackles a potentially controversial topic, bordering on the technology good/technology bad debate; however, the authors move us away from that into an exploration of the who and why behind technological advancements, offering the comment that just because technology can, does not mean technology must. The question of whether research and researchers put workers at the heart of the decision found that, largely, workers are recipients of technological controls, not considered fully or competently in the design, concluding 'If the development of wearable and insertable technology is to be expanded truly to enhance and improve working conditions, then the needs of and respect for the workers must be the principal consideration' (McAleenan *et al.*, 2019: p. 99). In many ways, this paper can be seen as a call for much more research, and we hope that in a future planned themed issue on the 'Ethical and social challenges of Construction 4.0',

to be edited by Dr Fred Sherratt and planned for 2020, more will be heard on the subject.

Moving away from the challenges of technology, the paper by Talabi *et al.* (2019) focuses on the personal qualities of supervisors, such as integrity/trust, openness/transparency, genuine care and accountability, and how they impact on front-line workers and their OSH performance. Which is followed by Emuze and Mollo (2019) who explore respect for people, discussing how poor working conditions and evident [dis]respect for people severely limit the promotion of safety, health and well-being on construction sites, citing for example a requirement to work in severe weather conditions without adequate protection. Simukondo (2019) also visits a similar theme of violation of workers' human dignity and labour rights, with a study that posits that developing countries are poor at establishing and implementing occupational health and safety legislation and programmes.

Our final paper, from Lawani *et al.* (2019), closes the journal with a discourse on trust and the link to worker engagement, presenting a suggested digital tool for OSH practitioners to evaluate and benchmark workers' maturity levels within their workplace towards improving OSH practices in construction. With that in mind, we bring you back to Dr Ayers' assertion that workers possess the intellect and the intelligence to make good, safe and healthy decisions. This edition has focussed in the most part on the rights of workers and equally the role of the civil engineers/managers to ensure that designs and processes are respecting of the workforce, their families and the community.

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