

Preface

The topic of Flexible Work Organizations is emerging as a key concern in Asia due to the opening up of economies. Flexibility is an important characteristic for success in dynamic and sometimes unpredictable environments (Farnese et al. 2015). Hence, it has been advocated that business enterprises practice reactive flexible capacity (in the form of adaptiveness and responsiveness) in order to cope with changing and uncertain business environments. Organizations may also endeavor to develop their capacity for flexibility through various organizational change initiatives, leadership strategies, reengineering, innovation in products and processes, the use of information and communication technology, learning orientations, and more.

The chapters in this book combine the concept of ‘Flexible Work Organizations’ with the various challenges associated with ‘Capacity Building in Asia.’ The chapters represent a variety of papers that were reviewed and developed following presentation at the 7th ICCB (International Conference on Contemporary Business) and the 14th GLOGIFT (Global Conference on Flexible Systems Management) held at Curtin Business School, Curtin University, Singapore, in October 2014. The twin International Conference theme was ‘Flexible Capacity Building in Asia and the Pacific.’ Here, practitioners and academics from different continents gathered and shared their practical experiences, knowledge, and insights into the conceptualization, formulation, implementation, and assessment of flexibility in the dynamic environment of business. The objective of the conference was to provide a knowledge-sharing platform for the dissemination of academic and practical findings through empirical study, qualitative modeling, case studies, new concepts, and state-of-the-art research.

The conference ‘call for papers’ resulted in more than 100 research papers being submitted which were then subjected to blind peer review prior to acceptance. Participating authors came from various parts of India, Austria, the USA, Singapore, Australia, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Selected papers that were presented at the conference were subsequently reviewed again and then organized in the form of this edited volume that is intended to serve as reference material in the area of Flexible Work Organizations and the Challenges of Capacity Building in Asia.

The selected chapters cover a variety of topics concerning Flexible Work Organizations and the Challenges of Capacity Building in Asia which are organized into following four parts:

- I. Flexible Work Organization
- II. Flexible Capacity Building for Management and HRM
- III. Flexibility and Internationalization
- IV. Capacity Building—Government and the Broader Economy

Part I on the topic of Flexible Work Organization incorporates six chapters. Chapter 1 helps to set the scene for the entire book as it focuses on the Theory of Flexible Systems Management. The chapter outlines numerous types of flexibilities in an organization while pointing out that although all these developments contribute to the theoretical basis of the paradigm of flexible systems management, a well-defined and comprehensive theory is still lacking. Consequently, the author endeavors to identify the building blocks of flexible systems management, their relationships, and causality. Chapter 2 focuses on telecommuting and the relatively new concept of co-working communities and how these practices can contribute to both individual and organizational flexibility. Co-working is defined as a practice where people occupy a desk on a casual or temporary basis in a workspace that is shared with others. It is pointed out that the difference between co-working and hot-desking (for example) is that the spaces are usually not controlled by an employer but managed and facilitated by the external organizers. Chapter 3 explores holistic learning in various contexts, introducing a cybernetic framework to assist in structuring exploration and further study of the topic. Chapter 4 examines Flexible Distribution Strategies in Network Marketing Companies, an area that has been largely overlooked in research to date. The purpose of the chapter is to compare customers' perceptions across two companies and formulate 'Distribution Flexibility' models to enable flexible distribution strategies. Chapter 5 examines flexibility and the socially sustainable business practices of two Indian manufacturing companies in different manufacturing sectors. Presenting an empirical study, the authors maintain that the research findings will be useful for supply chain managers in sustainability operations who want to better understand the diverse patterns of social sustainability, and how they can assist as instruments to improve decision making. Chapter 6, the final chapter in this part, examines the facilitation of Spirituality in the Workplace. The authors propose that workplace spirituality is increasingly being considered an organizational variable that affects employee behavior and organizational performance that can facilitate employees' experience of meaning, connectedness, and purpose in life. Focusing on three organizations, the chapter offers implications for practitioners and researchers wishing to further the study and practice of workplace spirituality.

Part II of the book—Flexible Capacity Building for Management and HRM—comprises five chapters. In Chap. 7, the concept 'Ethical Mindsets' is set in an international context. An ethical mindset is defined as '...an appreciation of and reflection on any situation through the filter of personal beliefs and values such as honesty, integrity, harmony, balance, truth seeking, making a difference, and

demonstrating professionalism, deriving from the strength rooted in an individual's inner-self' (Issa 2009, p. 163). This concept supports the importance of different cultures and argues that an appreciation of ethical mindsets will assist in enhancing national capacity building. Chapter 8 presents the findings from a study of the effects of work-life programs on employee attitudes and behavior in the Indonesian higher education sector. The work attitudes and behaviors examined include organizational citizenship behaviors, in-role performance, and organizational commitment. The relationship between work-life balance programs and employee behaviors and attitudes was tested via a survey across Indonesian higher education institutions. Chapter 9 discusses Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) programs and practices in the higher education sector in Thailand. The chapter identifies the relationship between HRM strategy, policies and practices, and organizational strategy in the Thai higher education system. This chapter identifies and classifies the HRM programs in place; examines the application of these programs and the impact and relevance of the programs for employees, and discusses measures to improve the design and application of HRM programs within the sector. Chapter 10 examines network-based social capital and the effectiveness of capacity building programs of a particular humanitarian international NGO in Myanmar with respect to networking, social entrepreneurship, capacity building, and targeted populations. There is a particular focus on women, particularly in relation to disaster-related events. The chapter presents a case study of an international NGO program that was involved in economic development for women and girls who lost family members and property after the Cyclone Nargis hit Labutta, Myanmar, in 2008. In Chap. 11, competency development and organizational flexibility in the Indian IT services sector is discussed. In this chapter, it is advocated that people competencies must be constantly upgraded or revised in organizations, since market conditions are constantly changing. In knowledge industries, it is argued that people competency plays a major role in the overall business. The chapter outlines a process for enhancing personnel competencies and organizational ability.

Part III of the book, Flexibility and Internationalization, consists of four chapters. Chapter 12 draws on recent corporate experiences in innovation concerning the unmet needs of the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) market. The author calls for a metanarrative of flexible capacity building in delivering sustainable outcomes, arguing that the search for a grand narrative essentially lies in the ability to overcome mindset traps, not only in the corporate arena, but also in relation to stakeholders such as policy makers, NGO's, and local communities. Chapter 13 concentrates on the flexible capacity building that is driving emerging markets and internationalization. The authors examine the influence of strategic capacity building with regard to the degree of internationalization among Indian firms. Findings from 200 analyzed surveys illustrated that commercial, operational systems and organizational capacity building have the maximum influence on strategic flexibility, which, in turn, was found to have a positive influence on the degree of internationalization of the Indian manufacturing firms that were analyzed. Chapter 14 in this part presents a framework for informal economies in developing nations,

clarifying linkages with the formal economies of both developing and developed nations as a function of national competitiveness. Using a case study to contextualize the framework, the authors conclude with suggestions for future research on the topic. Chapter 15 in this part explores the continuity and change forces of international technology strategy. The intention of the authors is to identify critical continuity and change forces that are associated with the management of international technology strategy. A hierarchical relationship of continuity and change was developed to analyze the effect on the technology performance of an organization with the intention that it provides a useful strategy for practitioners, and a guide for future scholars who may wish to further the study of the topic.

The final Part IV of this book centers on Capacity Building in relation to Governments and the Broader Economy and consists of five chapters. Chapter 16 in this part presents strategic analysis of actor competencies and their impact on e-Governance performance in the context of India. It is based on a survey of government officials and beneficiaries of government services. The competence level of actors has been measured in terms of their 'Ability to use project services,' 'Ability to use computing facilities,' and 'Ability to maintain contact' with implementers and beneficiaries. e-governance performance is measured as the common expected benefits. Chapter 17 deals with the concept of open innovation which contemporary organizations are looking for to cope with change. The authors examined this topic as a flexible practice for intellectual property management in the pharmaceutical sector based on the analysis of secondary data. The findings of this study, though mainly contextual, are intended to add to the conceptual understanding of open innovation and flexibility. Another study on pharmaceutical companies in the Indian context, based on secondary data, is reported in Chap. 18. This chapter attempts to touch upon the marketing strategies that the Indian pharmaceutical companies have adopted, to not just meet new challenges but also leverage on opportunities that have arisen after the implementation of the product patent regime in India. The authors of Chap. 19 report investment patterns and quarterly trading flexible strategies of the Indian mutual funds industry. This work suggests that investors trying to optimize return concentrate their focus on institutions having a large chunk of securities. In contrast, internally managed funds for educational institutions and foundations, which have their own asset management services, are not interested in window dressing their portfolio. The final Chap. 20 in this part of the volume presents an empirical validation of the hierarchical relationship models of strategic crystal elements of telecom business services in the Indian context. Focusing on the flowing stream strategy crystal as a base, it comprises continuity forces, change forces, enterprise factors, and customer factors, reporting on the empirical validation of previously informed total interpretive structural models for each one of these elements of the strategy crystal. The chapters in the final part of the book deal with diverse topics related to capacity building in government and the broader economy, which it is intended to serve as a sound basis for future researchers.

In summary, the various chapters in this book illustrate the concept of flexibility, as an organization's ability to react to and accommodate change in the environment (see Arnold et al. 2011). Most chapters have combined flexibility with capacity building in a range of different contexts in order to further understanding of the topics studied across several countries. The term capacity building is generally used with regard to community development. However, as it has been defined as the organizational and technical abilities, relationships, and values that enable organizations, groups, and individuals to achieve their objectives over time (see Matachi 2006), it was considered useful to integrate with the concept of flexibility for the purpose of this book.

It is anticipated that this edited volume on Flexible Work Organizations and the Challenges of Capacity Building in Asia will provide a useful resource for a variety of audiences such as management students and researchers; practicing business managers; consultants; and professional institutions.

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