

Systematic Occupational Health and Safety Management – Perspectives on an International Development. Edited by Kaj Frick, Per Langaa Jensen, Michael Quinlan, Tom Wilthagen. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd, 2000:527 p. Price SEK 784.00 ISBN: 0-08-043413-4. [This book can be obtained from the National Institute for Working Life, SE-171 84 Solna, Sweden]

Since the mid-1980s systematic occupational health and safety management (systematic OHSM) and OHSM systems have been developed in advanced industrialized countries. This book is based on papers presented at an international conference in Amsterdam in 1998. However, the articles are not the mere papers presented in the conference. The editors have made a major effort to put together a comprehensive and structured book. An example of this effort is the combined bibliography with more than 900 titles. The editors state that the book is the first comprehensive attempt to describe and evaluate the distinct features, dimensions, shortcomings, potentials, and prospects of the strategy of systematic OHSM, including its regulatory aspects. Altogether 33 authors from different disciplines related to OHSM have contributed to the book. Most of the authors come from the northern member states of the European Union, but also from Greece, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Brazil. Thus a variety of traditions, developments and experiences with OHSM has been presented. The book consists of 21 chapters. The first chapter is an introduction written by the editorial group. The rest are grouped into four sections. The first section deals with politics and strategies to promote systematic OHSM (chapters 2 to 7), the second concerns the applicability of OHSM in changing labor markets and business structures (chapters 8 to 11), the third focuses on the implementation and effects of OHSM (chapters 12 to 15), and the fourth features the integration of OHSM into business and management development (chapters 16 to 21).

The first part begins with a very thorough comparative and historical overview of OHSM. The authors divide the OHSM systems into private, standard, mandatory, and hybrid forms. Each of these systems requires workers to be involved in occupational health and safety issues, but the way they do this varies. The authors identify the following three reasons for the differences: (i) to combine the philosophies of safety and quality management, (ii) to comply with the guidance and regulations set up after the industrial disasters of the 1970s and 1980s, and (iii) to account for different cultures in

employer-employee relations (eg, unionization and traditions of conflict or cooperation between employers and unions).

The other chapters in the first section deal with the strategies and promotion of OHSM from different viewpoints, worker participation, the approach of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the United States, framework directive 89/391 of the European Union (EU), organizational theories, and the legal construction of OHSM systems.

The second part of the book consists of four chapters. They focus on the applicability of OHSM in changing labor markets. Chapter 8 deals with developing countries through a Brazilian perspective. The author points out that, in developing countries, there is a need to address issues related to development and underdevelopment, dictatorship and democracy, preindustrial and industrial or postindustrial production systems, tradition and science. The next chapter deals with the problems of OHSM in respect to precarious employment and work reorganization. It is argued that fractured labor markets make it more difficult for regulators to implement systematic occupational health and safety, for employers to adopt systems voluntarily, and for unions and workers to support this OHSM.

In chapter 10 the discussion focuses on the changing nature of the employer's responsibility. For instance, in public administration, due to increasing organizational complexity, new management structures and means of strategic control seem to be too robust for handling information relevant to OHSM. These arguments are based on Swedish experience. The last chapter in part 2 focuses on the promotion of occupational health and safety in small workplaces. Four examples, from Denmark, Sweden, Canada, and Australia & New Zealand are described. The four approaches vary, as illustrated by their names: the "Dialogue-Consultancy", "Regional Worker Representation", "Community Development-Economic Incentive" and "Side Door" approaches. The most innovative (or peculiar) is the last, from Australia & New Zealand. In this approach chartered accounting, along with other services, are available to small business employers to assist business owners in recognizing, understanding and complying with laws on occupational safety and health and associated responsibilities. A high coverage of information is achieved — but at the expense of quality?

Part 3 consists of descriptions of the implementation and effects of OHSM in different countries and

varying contexts. Analyses of risk assessment situations in Greece, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Denmark illustrate the differences in the implementation of EU framework directive 89/391 in different countries. In chapter 13, a political economy perspective to OHSM systems is given using United Kingdom and Ontario, Canada, as examples. The authors conclude that there is no evidence that the need for routine external regulation could be abolished by using OHSM systems, especially in the less developed countries. Chapter 14 focuses on the role of multidisciplinary (external) health services — or occupational health services — in the context of OHSM. The presentation is based on experiences from Denmark, Sweden, and The Netherlands. In the next chapter the author describes Norwegian internal control reform. The structure of this presentation is that of a policy analysis including the aims and central principles of the reform followed by an analysis of the implementation process and, as results, what has been attained. In the six chapters of the last section of the book the focus is on how to integrate OHSM into business and management development. The first presentation deals with the problems of using an economic rationale as the basis for OHSM. The author concludes that a more economical approach is needed to support the integration of OHSM into business management, but it can never be left to market forces alone. In the following chapter two OHSM and business management integration models from the United States (DuPont approach) and Japan (Toyota approach) are described and analyzed.

A variety of perspectives on the standardization and certification of OHSM systems is described in chapter 18. There is need for future harmonization in this field, as there is a broad variety of OHSM certificates already on the market. Danish and Dutch experiences with respect to the integration of OHSM and environmental management are the issues discussed in chapter 19. The authors conclude that a formal linking hardly results in effective coupling of the management of both domains. This chapter is followed by a presentation based on four case studies from Norway. The focus is on the implementation of internal control integration into management systems. Especially in small and middle-size firms,

it is useful to collaborate with large enterprises or to have networks with external facilitators and mediators. The last chapter of the book is entitled “What works? The Strategies Which Help to Integrate OHS Management Within Business Development and the Role of the Outsider”. The Australian authors state that safety management systems work better if the enterprises are aided in adopting a systematic approach rather than a specific formal system. It is important to strengthen workplace relationships through building trust, improving communication, and redistributing power. The role of the outsider is to allow the necessary questioning to take place.

As a whole, the book, with its 527 pages, is very interesting to read. The editors have structured the presentations in a logical order. The multidisciplinary background of the contributors is also one strength of the book, as are the presented experiences from different contexts. There is some variation in the structure of the individual presentations however. For instance, there is no homogeneity in outlining the conclusions in the end of the chapters. This is not a great problem, as the chapters are individual entities. Therefore it seemed at first a bit curious that there was no separate bibliography for each chapter. However, as I read the book in more detail, it appeared to be a good strategy considering the large number of references given. In the end of the book there is also an index which helps the reader find topics in different chapters. In conclusion, there is no question that this book is, as stated on the back cover, of value to all government advisers, academics, students, occupational health and safety professionals, managers and union officials who want to understand systematic OHSM and OHSM systems and the critical role they occupy in policy debates.

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