Chapter 4
Learning From Success:
International Best Practices in Reducing Occupational Accidents and Diseases

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ABSTRACT

This chapter contributes to the book by providing a structured, comparative analysis of successful international occupational health and safety models, moving beyond regulatory descriptions to focus on why and how certain systems effectively reduce occupational accidents and diseases. Unlike chapters that concentrate on single-country cases or specific regulations, this contribution synthesizes diverse regional experiences—developed and developing alike—to extract transferable success factors and policy-relevant lessons. The chapter aligns closely with the book's core themes of strategies, systems, and success stories, offering both analytical depth and practical implications. Its emphasis on prevention, learning from success, and adaptability ensures relevance for academics, policymakers, and practitioners seeking evidence-based pathways to improve OHS performance across different institutional and socio-economic contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace accidents and occupational diseases continue to be one of the most significant occupational health and safety issues on a global scale today. According to international estimates, millions of workers are injured in workplace accidents

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each year, while hundreds of thousands lose their lives due to occupational diseases or causes related to workplace accidents. This situation is not limited to individual health losses; it also has multidimensional consequences such as loss of productivity, increased social security expenditures, and weakened economic sustainability. The fact that occupational diseases are largely unreported shows that the real scale of the problem goes beyond official statistics (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019; Takala et al., 2014).

Traditional occupational health and safety approaches have been shaped primarily within a reactive framework for many years, focusing on investigating causes and compensating for consequences after accidents have occurred. However, the limited effectiveness of this approach has become apparent, particularly in high-risk sectors where accidents and occupational diseases persist. This situation has accelerated the shift towards preventive, systematic, and learning organization-based models in occupational health and safety management. This new approach, which emphasizes elements such as risk-based management, worker participation, leadership, and continuous improvement, treats accidents not as "inevitable" outcomes but as preventable events (Reason, 2000; Robson et al., 2007).

In this transformation process, not only the existence of regulatory legislation but also the question of how these regulations are implemented and under what conditions they achieve success has become critically important. In this context, the experiences of countries and sectors that have achieved meaningful and sustainable reductions in occupational accidents and diseases provide an important source of learning on a global scale. The "learning from success stories" approach aims to go beyond abstract policy goals in the field of occupational health and safety and reveal the mechanisms through which concrete practices produce effective results. This approach requires not only identifying good practices but also analyzing why they work (EU-OSHA, 2019; Walters et al., 2016).

This section aims to examine occupational health and safety practices that have been successful in reducing work accidents and occupational diseases in different countries and contexts, identifying their common features and distinguishing characteristics. The section's original contribution is that it does not merely describe successful examples; it evaluates the institutional structure, management approach, risk management approach, and safety culture components behind these successes within a holistic framework. Thus, it aims to provide transferable policy and practice lessons for countries with different socio-economic and institutional structures. The fundamental assumption is clear: Accidents are not inevitable; they can be largely prevented through the right systems, effective practices, and learning organizations (Hämäläinen, Takala, & Saarela, 2017; Rasmussen, 1997).

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