
Foreword

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Biographical notes: Dr. Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos is Professor of Business Administration in the Department of Business Administration and Accountability, at the Faculty of Economics of The University of Oviedo (Spain). Her teaching and research initiatives focus on the areas of strategic management, knowledge management, intellectual capital measuring and reporting, organisational learning and human resources management. Her doctoral thesis was entitled ‘Intellectual capital, knowledge management and human resource management systems: Influence on organizational performance’ and papers from this thesis are now published in leading journals. She was Guest Editor of the International Journal of Technology Management.

Professor Margaret Peteraf, of the Tuck School at Dartmouth, is best known for her work on the Resource-based Theory. Her paper, “The Cornerstones of Competitive Advantage: A Resource-Based View”, *SMJ* 1993, won the *Strategic Management Journal* Best Paper Prize in 1999 for its deep influence on the field. She is also recognised for her work on cognitive strategic groups and, more recently, for her work on dynamic capabilities. She is presently the Chair of the Business Policy and Strategy Division of the Academy of Management. In addition she serves as Chair of the Competitive Strategy Interest Group of the Strategic Management Society.

The strategic knowledge base of an organisation represents a potential source of competitive advantage (Peteraf and Barney, 2003). Knowledge-based resources that are rare, valuable, nonimitable, and without substitutes configure the *strategic* knowledge base. By this, we mean that they are strategic assets for the firm and, as such, may lead to sustainable advantage (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993). How lasting this advantage depends, in large part, on the environmental circumstances. Thus, while this knowledge base can provide a competitive advantage at a particular time, the advantage can be eroded by different factors.

How can the firm avoid losing its competitive advantage? One answer lies in the concepts of organisational learning and innovation. Organisational learning is an organisational process that contributes to the creation, development, deployment and renewal of the knowledge base. Linked to this concept is the concept of organisational innovation. The process of organisational innovation requires the capacity to learn how to translate ideas or intentions into new action. With regard to innovation, several studies found that a learning orientation has a positive impact on the innovativeness of the organisation. This is consistent with the idea that innovation and learning are inextricably linked, and is supported by recent empirical findings. Evidence shows that organisations that are more innovative tend to be more profitable, suggesting that one way of becoming more innovative, and hence more profitable, is to encourage greater levels of a learning orientation within the organisation.

The Special Issue on “Organisational learning, innovation and knowledge: the creation of a sustained competitive advantage” presents a collection of six outstanding papers that address key topics in this field. It combines theoretical papers with empirical ones. Let us briefly summarise the content of this issue.

Briance Mascarenhas and Diana L. Day present a paper entitled ‘Overcome management bias and win the globalisation and innovation races: a four-step international expansion strategy’. The authors suggest that with shorter product cycles, companies need to improve their innovation capacity and spread rapidly their innovations abroad before they are imitated or superseded. But when expanding internationally, managers often frame their decisions narrowly, leading to overconfidence and optimism in their market entry strategies. This management bias often leads firms into less attractive markets with large inflexible investments that limit learning and innovation. To overcome this management bias, the authors of the paper advance a *Four-Step Strategy* to achieve broad, rapid, deep, and innovative international expansion.

In his paper ‘Intellectual productivity: measuring and improving productivity in the intangible economy’, Christiaan D. Stam investigates the so-called “productivity enigma” from the perspectives of intellectual capital and knowledge productivity. Both concepts are closely related to the New Growth Theory, and come together in the concept of intellectual capital multiplication. This concept shows that the different types of intangible resources (human capital, relational capital and structural capital) enhance each other and that structural capital emerges as the main source of productivity in the current competitive environment.

The paper ‘Case-based approaches for knowledge application and organisational learning’ written by Chengbo Wang presents a framework dealing with the strategic issues within a manufacturing system in which two important techniques are defined – the expert adaptation approach and the expert evaluation approach. These two approaches provide structured processes to execute organisational learning and knowledge application. They are intended to guide practitioners engaged in the process of manufacturing competence development and improvement. These two approaches are based on case-based reasoning methodology and rely on cases as the main source of knowledge. After presenting these two approaches, the paper introduces two types of tests to verify the functionality of these approaches. In concluding, the paper summarises the applicability of the two approaches.

In the paper 'Russian Small Innovative Enterprises (SIEs), intellectual capital and competitiveness: knowledge-based SIEs in a transitional economy', George Tovstiga, Stefan Odenthal, Vera A. Popova, Igor. P. Efimov, Sergey V. Moskalev and Ivan M. Bortnik, report on the first part of a study that examines the impact of intellectual capital on the competitive performance of Russian Small Innovative Enterprises (SIEs). The research targeted in this study ultimately attempts to measure antecedents and consequents of effective intellectual capital management in SIEs in the transitional Russian economy. The research offers ground-breaking work on several counts; while a number of studies have looked at the competitive impact of intellectual capital on enterprise performance, very few have targeted small innovative enterprises and even fewer have examined companies in transitional economies.

Berman Kayis and Nikos Paipetis, in the paper 'Validation of organisational learning models-theoretical framework and empirical analyses of five Australian manufacturing organisations', explore the strategic attributes that may enable manufacturers to become successful learning organisations. Their paper is based on five case studies in which TQM implementation was in place for at least three years. The characteristics of these learning organisations are described, followed by a discussion of the results.

The last paper of this special issue, 'Solving the context sharing dilemma in knowledge management' by Roy Williams, concerns one of the most basic dilemmas of knowledge management: how do we share contextual knowledge? As most practitioners and researchers agree that knowledge and context cannot be separated, that fact raises the question of how knowledge can be used across contexts, and shared between different people. This paper approaches knowledge management differently from the traditional distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge, although it aims to take that discussion forward as well. It is based in unstructured data management applications and research, and the recent development of visualisation techniques and platforms for processing and presenting information and knowledge.

References

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