Editorial

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Biographical notes: Krisztina Demeter obtained her PhD Degree at Corvinus University of Budapest (as called today) in 2001. She has been Associate Professor there since 2002. She played an important role to establish courses in Operations and Service Management at the university. She has numerous publications both in English and in Hungarian. She has responsibilities in European Operations Management Association and in International Society for Inventory Research. Her major research fields are manufacturing strategy and supply chain management. She takes part in international (IMSS and GMRG) and Hungarian research programs (e.g., research on competitiveness, supplier capabilities in the automotive industry).

European Operations Management Association (EurOMA) is a European-based network for academics and managers in the field of operations management, including manufacturing, services, supply chains and the like (see www.euroma-online.org). The 12th international conference of EurOMA took place in Budapest with the theme 'Operations and Global Competitiveness'. This was the first occasion that EurOMA chose a place in Central and Eastern Europe.

International Journal of Manufacturing and Technology Management is one of the journals which publish a special issue for the best papers of the conference.

This special issue contains a wide variety of papers presented at the conference. It is really difficult, if not impossible to give a logical flow of the topics included. The issue includes papers about intra- and intercompany networks, mass customisation and functional integration, innovation and IT. Readers can find diverse methodologies: surveys and case studies, as well as action research is represented. Diversity is also represented in the nationality of authors. In the following, we have a look at the papers one by one.

The order cycle can consist of several stages: order quotation, order processing, procurement, manufacturing, shipping, installation and invoicing. The paper by *Gera Welker and Jacob Wijngaard* (University of Groningen, the Netherlands) discusses the responsiveness of the order processing stage of this cycle that concerns the process of translating customer orders into production orders as well as into feasible order agreements. More specifically, on the basis of five manufacturing case studies, authors discuss the functioning of the operational network itself as well as the relations among three interrelated factors – namely the organisational setting, the planning and control

framework and the use of information systems that influence the performance of the operational network. The main conclusion is that the functioning of the operational network in order processing is mainly influenced by the degree of formalisation of the planning and control framework.

Daniel Vázques-Bustelo (University of Oviedo, Spain) surveyed 283 Spanish firms to replicate the survey by Duray et al. (2000) on types of mass customisation. The paper validates the original typology (fabricators, involvers, modularisers and assemblers): each mass customisation type adopts a different approach to the manufacture of mass-customised products regarding process choice and process control. However, mass customisers can use similar design, manufacturing and administrative technologies and can attain similar performance regardless of the type of mass customisation adopted.

Mass customisation, supply chain management, process focus all need close coordination of several functional areas. The paper by *Krisztina Demeter and Krisztina Kolos* (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary) discusses to what extent three functional areas, manufacturing, logistics and marketing can contribute to business success one by one and together. On the basis of a survey including 154 Hungarian manufacturing companies they concluded that manufacturing seems to play the key role among the three functions, while the role of logistics is quite marginal. Altogether the three functions have a limited affect on business success.

Now we move to another functional area, innovation. *Paul Couglan and Ann Fergus* (University of Dublin, Ireland) use action research to explore the path to value innovation, a 'simultaneous pursuit of radically superior value for buyers and lower costs for companies' (Kim and Mauborgne, 2004). In order to explore value innovation opportunities at the researched company, authors used the concepts of value chain, value disciplines and value migration. Conclusions:

- several action cycles are required to achieve the expected results
- all action cycles have to include a sequence of actions
- achievement of value innovation requires development and alignment of manufacturing excellence, strategic flexibility and demand.

While the previous papers concentrated on manufacturing management issues, the next paper placed technologies in focus. *Jesús García Arca and J. Carlos Prado Pr*ado (University of Vigo, Spain) used a survey of more then 300 Spanish companies from the food sector, including packaging manufacturers, packers and distributors. Their objective was twofold:

- To discover the effect of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on competitiveness.
- To explore what factors hinder the faster diffusion of ICTs. As they found, EDI and barcodes are used at medium level and expected to spread rapidly in the close future.

However, RFID is not used at all, mainly due to the lack of knowledge and standardisation as well as to high costs and companies do not expect to use them in the future.

The paper by *Elmar Kutch* (University of Surrey, UK) and *Harvey Maylor* (University of Bath, UK) stays at information technologies but from another perspective. On the basis of semistructured interviews, they analysed 18 IT projects to see how they handle failures and to what extent they rely on continuous improvement developed for repetitive manufacturing. As authors conclude, the analysed IT projects usually use success measures but neglect failure measures. Failure is still considered as an enemy instead of an opportunity for improvement and learning. Thus, it is important to develop a set of specific failure measures for project management in order to stimulate learning.

This is the point where we virtually set our focus to external relations, even if we stay intracompany issues. *Robin von Haartman and Lars Bengtsson* (University of Gävle, Sweden) analysed the effect of supplier involvement on competitiveness. They argued that higher manufacturing competence is a key enabler to absorb external knowledge and thus increase competitiveness. There hypothesis, which was supported, was investigated by a large-scale survey including 267 Swedish companies.

The last paper by *Ralph Riedel and Egon Mueller* (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany) is the widest in scope. In this paper a conceptual framework is developed that integrates cultural issues into the research and practice of supply chain planning and operating. The framework is based on theories of culture, psychology, decision processes and on concepts of supply chain management and networks. The ideas are supplemented with some empirical evidence from case studies. As authors conclude, the configuration of organisations and supply chains as well as behaviour and decision making are dependent on the cultural background in which they take place. Thereby, culture in general as well as corporate culture plays a decisive role.

Let me finalise this editorial with some acknowledgements. First of all, I thank the chief editor of IJMTM, Dr. Mohammed Dorgham, who gave green light to this special issue and was patient to wait for the result. I would like to thank the EurOMA board for the trust and help they provided in the organisational matters before, during and after the conference. Special thanks to Chris Voss, Harry Boer and Jan Olhager, who gave several suggestions for papers to be included in the special issues. Finally, thanks to the referees of the special issue, who really increased the level of quality with helpful advices in their reviews. I think they have earned naming them in alphabetic order: Harry Boer, Federico Caniato, Paul Coughlan, Professor Dr. Rebecca Duray, Linda Englyst, Cipriano Forza, Susan Freeman, Patrik Jonsson, Professor Dr. Bart MacCarthy, Dragan Milosevic, Petra Pekkanen, Gerald Reiner, Pietro Romano, Martin Rudberg, Daniel Samson, Giovani da Silveira, Dr. Palie Smart, Harm-Jan.Steenhuis, Milé Terziovski, Professor Debbie Tesch and Andrea Vinelli.

As member of the EurOMA Board, I hope you find the papers interesting and we can meet with you on the next EurOMA conference. Have a good reading.

References

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