
Introduction

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This special issue on “*brokering knowledge and corporate culture*” covers the relationships between culture and knowledge as concepts or areas of reality that are closely linked to company practice and management literature. As regards knowledge, “all forms of our action upon reality (know how, technology, organisational routines and differing practices) or of our understanding of the world (systematic organisation of ideas and concepts) are *forms of knowledge*; and all the ways in which physical, technical or social reality manifests itself as a consequence of nature or human action, are the *supports* on which knowledge is founded” (Akehurst et al., 2011, pp.183–184).

These *supports* explain basic aspects of knowledge creation and its transfer or dissemination (*brokering knowledge*). In an analysis of knowledge with reference to the creation of knowledge through interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Crossan et al. (1999) refer to individual members of the organisation, groups and the organisation as a whole as the *ontological supports* of knowledge; and in a broader vision, where knowledge creation stems from experience and practice in different areas of reality, the ontological basis or support for knowledge lies in the physical, technical and social dimensions of that reality in which practice and process of learning takes place (Spender, 1996, 2007, 2008).

But, the important issue to emphasise here is that the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge occurs within a society and its culture and within the culture of an organisation. Both provide the *underlying assumptions* or the basic support for an organisation’s behaviour and strategic orientations (Dauber et al., 2012; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Thus any practice or learning process will be influenced and guided by an organisational and social cultural context. In this regard Tsoukas (1996, p.17) highlights “the unarticulated background related to human understanding” as “a set of subsidiary particulars which are tacitly integrated by individuals”, in a way where there is “a focal target, and the person who links the two”. That is, there is a set of ‘*secondary details*’ that are in the shadows of people’s consciousness (sensation, intuitions, knowledge stick to the practice), fruit of interaction with the ontological support when they are integrated through intentions and objectives of the individuals, and feed into the organisation through formalisation and conceptualisation of knowledge. Organisation and integration are not possible without goals (i.e. a strategy and its corresponding objectives) which are the result of the underlying culture.

Culture and knowledge are therefore, closely related. We integrate and order, or we build knowledge in one way or another, according to the organisational context and the underlying assumptions (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Nonaka et al., 2000) and according to the strategy or objectives we pursue (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Tsoukas, 1996, 2005); at the same time, culture, in a single-loop learning and double-loop learning dynamic (Argyris and Schön, 1978), requires the contribution of knowledge to evolve and change in the context of a model of organisational culture (Dauber et al., 2012).

Explicitly or implicitly, this culture-knowledge relationship runs through a large part of the management literature, although “culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, [and] on the other hand, as conditioning elements of future action” (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952, p.181). The approaches or significant studies that consider common experiences as a prerequisite to shared motives and values (an on-going interaction process linked to practice as the way to form a culture and attribute meaning to things), include the works by Kellogg et al. (2006), Orlikowski (1992, 2000) and Weick and Roberts (1993). In all these studies, underlying assumptions and behaviour are constituted through practice, and, by repetition practice becomes institutionalised. This more schematic view highlights the importance of the type of task as a determining factor of the organisation as a whole and shares the organic contingency approach (Donaldson, 2001).

With respect to culture as the guiding factor of any form of know-how, technology, decision making process or behaviour, the work by Nonaka et al. (2000) illustrates the necessary relationship between culture and behaviour; and in a broader sense, it shows the importance of culture in its relationship with society as a whole, as in ‘*institutionalism*’ of Douglass North (1981, 1990, 2005) and the ‘*institutional approach to entrepreneurship*’ (Peng and Shekshnia, 2001; Veciana et al., 2005). While common experiences in practice and repetition of practices influence basic underlying assumptions and values, in an iterative process underlying assumptions and values simultaneously guide and explain the way practices are carried out and how experience is acquired. They are not contradictory, but mutually supportive interactive processes (Peris-Ortiz, 2009; Peris-Ortiz et al., 2012; Vivas-López et al., 2011). They are parts (or dimensions) of the same process: (a) the process of building technical and social reality, conditioned by the material and social circumstances that build peoples’ characters (basic assumptions and values); and (b) at the same time, the basic assumptions and values condition the practices and explain their strategies and organisational forms (Dauber et al., 2012; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Schein, 1985; Tsui et al., 2007).

Finally, according to the strategy formulation school (Andrews, 1971; Ansoff, 1965; Christensen et al., 1982; Porter, 1980, 1985), the deliberate intention of employers and managers formulates and plans the strategy and designs the organisation, attempted to order the behaviour of the members of the organisation and achieve the objectives. This activity will inevitably be conditioned by their basic assumptions and values (Prahalad and Bettis, 1986; Admad and Azman, 2003), but their capacity to rationalise reality can modify the existing culture or create, at least in part, a new culture (Barnard, 1938).

In the context of these relations between culture and knowledge we present the five articles that form this special issue. The articles show that changes and advances in corporate culture by firms lead to innovation through knowledge creation and to better performance in domestic and international markets. Corporate culture, as we have seen, is a broad and complex category that ranges from the strategic orientation to the relation between intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship and the way in which behaviour affects learning, knowledge and innovation.

The first article is on ‘The importance of an export-oriented culture for export performance’ by Antonio Navarro-García, F. Javier Rondán-Cataluña and Francisco J. Acedo-González. This article shows that although it is known that the success (or failure) of firms operating in a given export environment depends on strategic orientation, the impact it has on export activity requires deeper study. The authors develop and test a model to study the impact of strategic export orientation through two components: export

activity and export market orientation (EMO). The authors perform an empirical study of Spanish export firms, collecting data through personal interviews with export managers of 150 randomly selected firms, from a population of 1734 firms. The analysis uses structural equations modelling via PLS (partial least squares), in which they developed two distinct stages: evaluation of the proposed measurement model and analysis of the structural model. The authors find that the proposed model offers a suitable framework to explain how strategic export orientation is an essential antecedent of organisational behaviour in foreign markets. This orientation influences strategic decisions aimed at adapting the elements of marketing mix to the needs of foreign markets, building sustainable competitive advantages.

In the authors' own words, "proactive behaviours and EMO practices are fundamental for the success of exporting strategic action, for achieving competitive advantages in foreign market, and for continuous improvement of export performance. Therefore, it is advisable to foster a corporate culture based on the promotion of values and proactive behaviour towards foreign markets in export managers. This culture should be focused on removing the psychological export barriers, on keeping constant contact and continuous exchange of information with foreign agents and distributors, and on increasing international business activity".

The second article is 'Exploring the links between goal-setting, satisfaction and corporate culture in exhibitors at international art shows' by Camilo Prado-Román, Alicia Blanco-González and Francisco Díez-Martín. During the last decade exhibitions have positioned themselves as one of the most efficient methods of promotion and market research. Art and collectible trade shows have become an important sector of the exhibition industry. This sector has shown interesting counter-cyclical growth, attributed to the industry's status as a source of alternative investment and reserve assets. The article evaluates the way the planning process of international trade shows affects performance and resultant satisfaction levels among a sample of exhibitors in Spain. The analysis uses a sequential model for trade show planning activities during three phases: pre-show, at-show, and post-show, to which the authors add a variable accounting for satisfaction; measuring the relationship between performance and expectation fulfilment. Via email and on-line questionnaires, the authors contacted 415 art and collecting companies and obtained 199 responses. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed sequential model. The authors find that, although the general model of trade show planning is not applicable to the art and collectible sector, the addition of a variable measuring satisfaction gives a clearer insight into measuring the efficacy of planning. In most cases, exhibitors reported low satisfaction towards two of their most important goals: relationship-improvement and information-gathering. By contrast, they reported high satisfaction in unplanned categories: sales and image-building. The authors advise exhibitors to incorporate post-show evaluation mechanisms into their planning to discover which factors are causing unsatisfactory performance with respect to their main two goals, but satisfactory unplanned outcomes.

This research is useful for exhibitors, who want to plan more effectively, and for trade show organising entities in their effort to attract participating companies. The article shows that it is necessary to review the strategic planning process in exhibitors trade show planning. Exhibitors should introduce the concept of "planning" within the corporate culture of their companies. Results show that there is no single-loop learning with respect to pre-show and at-show activities, because there is no post-show assessment. The activity oriented espoused values and related practices need to be

adapted. This change in organisational culture and activities will improve exhibitors' results, their positioning and differentiation in international trade fairs, achieve higher levels of satisfaction and encourage attendance at European fairs.

The third article 'Corporate social responsibility: a crossroad between changing values, innovation, and internationalisation' is by Inmaculada Carrasco-Monteagudo and Inmaculada Buendía-Martínez and addresses changing corporate culture values in firms through the reinforcement of social responsibility. They state that the effects of corporate scandals and crisis effects have led to corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a means to satisfy social pressure and ensure greater transparency in company activities. Nonetheless, it is not clear if CSR is a source of knowledge creation that encourages a firm's competitiveness through innovation and internationalisation. To disentangle this, the authors define CSR as an element of "world-culture" that allows the transfer of cultural values from the macro-level (nations) and transforming them as part of corporate culture in the micro-level (business organisations values). To address these issues, the authors collected a set of 2007 data from 32 countries, measuring among others variables such as corporate social responsibility, export intensity, wealth, or economic growth. The authors' findings show that there is a positive correlation between corporate values and competitive advantages mediated by the use of CSR as a driver. This means that firms perceive ethical and responsible behaviour as a strategic driver for restoring trust and innovation in the international arena.

Application of corporate social responsibility by firms opens new business opportunities that can materialise in greater innovation and internationalisation, both with positive effects on business results and therefore on economic growth. Taking into account that this new development of innovation and internationalisation is motivated by the application of business practices related to post-materialist values, such as solidarity, quality of life, and environmental protection, it is possible to affirm that CSR promotes economic development through business innovation and internationalisation.

The fourth article is on 'Intrapreneurship conditioning factors from a resource-based theory' and written by Andreu Turró, Laura López and David Urbano. It highlights that although intrapreneurship has a positive relation to organisational performance and innovation, there is very little empirical analysis of corporate business ventures (entrepreneurship). This article analyses the factors that affect companies' corporate entrepreneurship with an empirical study using logistic regression analysis for 24,304 observations from 10 countries obtained in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) from 2008; the largest survey-based study of entrepreneurship in the world. In the article, internal entrepreneurship is classified within three dimensions: new business venturing, innovativeness and strategic renewal. In their main findings, the authors show that companies' resources and capabilities are a key factor in the development of intrapreneurship and in implanting innovative strategies successfully. Moreover, it is illustrated that intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship are affected by almost the same factors, so that fostering entrepreneurship means fostering intrapreneurship, and vice versa.

Of the factors that enhance intrapreneurship, organisational culture is a relevant factor which appears implicitly related to the main independent variables of the study (specific training, entrepreneurial experience, competences and opportunity identification).

The fifth and final article deals with 'The ethics of foreign knowledge brokers: a conceptual and empirical framework', written by Jordi Paniagua and Juan Sapena. It addresses the empirical implications of brokering knowledge in an international context

by studying the impact on foreign direct investment, employment of local restraints in corporate culture, and democratic openness in developing countries. The authors use a definition of knowledge brokers as corporations that transfer knowledge from where it is known to where it is not, and contribute to the literature by linking knowledge brokers to ethics and corporate culture, given that knowledge brokerage is intimately related to knowledge spill-overs. In their empirical study, the authors present a model with heterogeneous firms and use data for bilateral aggregate investments and jobs between 16 countries from 2003 to 2009. In their main findings, the authors report that the empirical evidence supported the ethical dilemma that multinational enterprises are not doing so well, globally, since developing economies find incentives to diminish democratic openness in order to increase foreign knowledge spanning. Specifically, the ethical component varies between new and settled foreign firms. What at start of a foreign operation foreigners consider being ethical, that changes with time as the foreigners become assimilated into the local culture. Yet, during this process new knowledge and innovations are being transmitted to developing host countries, so that foreign knowledge spanning is doing something good, at least for the host.

We hope that the articles in this special issue of the *European Journal of International Management* will contribute to the understanding of management in Spain and Europe and thus facilitate the research programme proposed when this journal was founded in 2007 (cf. Fink and Holden, 2007).

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