
Preface: Intellectual capital, education and information technologies: some insights on knowledge-based resources

Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos

Department of Business Administration,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
The University of Oviedo,
Avda del Cristo, s/n 33.071 Oviedo, Asturias, Spain
Email: patriop@uniovi.es

1 Introduction

Human capital will be a major driving force for the recovery of the negative impacts of the health, social and economic disruptions caused by the covid-19 outbreak in 2020. Governments, education policy makers and educational institutions around the world need to assess national educational system (Lytras and Ordóñez de Pablos, 2008) and heavily invest to build strong academic programs that create and enhance the skills and competences needed to enter in the post-covid-19 labour markets.

The Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) proposed by the European Commission (2020) has among its two strategic priorities, the development of appropriate digital skills and competences and the fostering of a digital educational ecosystem. According to the European Commission (2019), “Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, have the most advanced digital economies in the EU followed by the UK, Luxembourg, Ireland and Estonia.” One of the dimensions of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is human capital, which is described in this index, as “internet user skills and advanced skills” [European Commission, (2019), p.2].

It is important to build human capital with the skills and competences required for the new labour markets. Educational systems must offer education for the new professional profiles needed to deal with the new and emerging challenges and opportunities now and in the post-covid-19 scenario. Governments, schools and universities must invest in digital strategies in education to reinforce online education and hybrid education (Zhang et al., 2012, 2014).

Human capital is one of the components of intellectual capital. The two other components – relational capital and structural capital – will also be crucial for the reset of the world economy. Companies, organisations and regions need to have a clear picture of their intellectual capital in order to use these knowledge-based resources to build (Anifowose et al., 2020; Aversano et al., 2020; Ordóñez de Pablos and Edvinsson, 2020; Sardo and Serrasqueiro, 2019; Švarc et al., 2021; Xia and De Beelde, 2018).

2 Contents of the issue

The fourth issue of 2021 presents a collection of five papers addressing key topics for competitiveness and sustainability of companies and economies, from human capital and higher education to intellectual capital disclosure and corporate governance (CG). They are focused on Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Italy and Iran.

The paper titled ‘Students’ learning outcomes and satisfaction. An investigation of knowledge transfer during social distancing policies’ (by Magni and Sestino) states that:

“During the covid-19 pandemic, the researchers discovered that a billion students accessed digital channels, thus confirming the centrality of digital technologies in education. Considering that student satisfaction refers to a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of the educational experiences lived and that the perceived quality of an educational background is a consequence of student satisfaction, this paper investigates the role of e-learning practices in a knowledge transfer’s environment, such as the university. Mainly, through an exploratory analysis, the paper gives some specific insights, investigating students’ satisfaction in terms of interaction between students, technology, and original contents. The results show how digital technologies are transforming the education experience by shedding light on e-learning outcomes and students’ satisfaction. The principal managerial implications of the paper focus on the begin to understand the need to acquire digital infrastructures in universities, reducing the technological gaps, and considering the implementation of online learning solutions.”

The paper titled ‘Intellectual capital performance model and comprehensive financial performance: evidence from firms listed in the Jakarta Islamic Index’ (by Ulum and Soepriyanto) states that:

“Given the increasing relevance of IC for SMEs and the need for more research in the field, this study adopts a structured literature review to analyze extant research related to IC in SMEs. Results of this study contribute in advancing a proposed future research agenda. Three main areas have been outlined: nontraditional areas of investigation could be analyzed, more attention could be devoted to this topic from journals in the small business area and, finally, the analysis of the specific effect that IC could have on SMEs performance could be deepened.”

The paper titled ‘Corporate governance and intellectual capital disclosure’ (by Kamath) proposes that:

“Corporate governance (CG) characteristics of firms do have influence on the financial and intangible performance of firms. Recent research studies find significant impact of CG on voluntary disclosures in annual reports of the firms. Intellectual capital disclosures are voluntary disclosures that have gained significant attention in recent years. This paper tries to analyse the nature and extent of intellectual capital disclosure of four groups of firms from manufacturing and service sector in India for the financial year 2017–18. Further it explores CG characteristics of the firms and its influence on extent of IC disclosures. The results of paper indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of disclosures in service and manufacturing sector. The nature of disclosures is varied among four sub-groups. Human capital disclosures are highest in manufacturing sector, whereas customer capital disclosures are more in service sector. Board size, its independence has a significant positive impact

on the extent of overall IC disclosures. The age of the firm and its size has a very strong impact on the level of IC disclosures in almost all industries. The financial performance measured by return on assets of the firms also show association in some cases.”

The paper titled ‘Measuring the human capital strategic readiness based on organisational capabilities’ (by Ardakan and Ebadi) affirms that:

“The human resource can create value for the organization by having high performance, when individuals have competencies aligned with the organization’s strategy. Since organizational capabilities translate strategies into actions and they are a common terminology of strategies and organizational components, the goal of the present research is to measure the HR strategic readiness regarding organizational capabilities. The proposed mechanism has been reviewed by a case study research method. The study findings indicate that product development, market development, product promotion and stabilization of quality are the strategies emphasized by the organization. Among six strategic job families identified, the strategic readiness of one group was weak, one group was moderate and other job families had acceptable strategic readiness.”

Finally, the paper titled ‘Patterns of inequality in higher education: the case of students’ field choice’ (by Asfaw) states that:

“In an expanding higher education system that focuses on access, understanding the dynamics of inequality in the effort to provide educational opportunity to the majority is central. The main objective of this study is to investigate the pattern of field choice and the factors that influence students’ field choice in two purposefully selected colleges. A total of 125 first-year students, 45 from Law School in College of Law and Governance and 80 from Language Departments (one Foreign and one Local Language Department) in College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication (CHLSJC) participated in the study. The result indicated that students in Law School have better socioeconomic status and achievement than the students in the language departments. Similarly, students in Law School seem to consider practical factors while students in the CHLSJC consider interpersonal factors as most influential in their field choice. The existing differences in the students’ background and the factors they considered in their field choice process are found to be a continuation of prior inequalities and that they further perpetuate inequality in the higher education system in Ethiopia.”

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editorial board members of *the International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital* for their time and effort invested in the journal. Also, a great thank you for our reviewers that are always ready to read and review new submissions. And finally, I cannot forget the great support from the Inderscience staff, especially from Alexandra.

References

- Anifowose, M., Abang, S. and Zakari, M.A. (2020) 'Integrated capitals reporting and companies' sustainable value: evidence from the Asian continent', *Asian Review of Accounting*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp.567–589.
- Aversano, N., Nicolò, G., Sannino, G. and Polcini, P.T. (2020) 'The integrated plan in Italian public universities: new patterns in intellectual capital disclosure', *Meditari Accountancy Research*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp.655–679.
- European Commission (2019) *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019* [online] <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10211-2019-ADD-1/en/pdf> (accessed 21 December 2020).
- European Commission (2020) *Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027). Resetting Education and Training for the Age* [online] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en (accessed 21 December 2020).
- Lytras, M.D. and Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2008) 'The role of a "make" or internal human resource management system in Spanish manufacturing companies: empirical evidence', *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp.464–479.
- Ordóñez de Pablos, P. and Edvinsson, L. (Eds.) (2020) *Intellectual Capital in the Digital Economy*, Routledge, London.
- Sardo, F. and Serrasqueiro, Z. (2019) 'On the relationship between intellectual capital and service SME survival and growth: a dynamic panel data analysis', *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.213–238.
- Švarc, J., Lažnjak, J. and Dabić, M. (2021) 'The role of national intellectual capital in the digital transformation of EU countries. Another digital divide?', *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, ahead-of-print.
- Xia, B.S. and De Beelde, I. (2018) 'Corporate governance and intellectual capital disclosure: evidence from the Scandinavian countries', *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp.104–118.
- Zhang, X., Liu, L., Ordóñez de Pablos, P. and She, J. (2014) 'The auxiliary role of information technology in teaching: Enhancing programming course using Alice', *International Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp.560–565.
- Zhang, X., Ordóñez de Pablos, P. and Zhang, Y. (2012) 'The relationship between incentives, explicit and tacit knowledge contribution in online engineering education project', *International Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp.1341–1346.