Preface: Change, strategy and competitive advantage: understanding key issues for success

Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos

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

1   Introduction

The academic journal *International Journal of Strategic Change and Management* (*IJSCM*) fosters discussion on strategic change management implementation and related topics. It offers readers a wealth of valuable material on theories and practices which underpin successful strategic change in companies, organisations and economies globally.

Learning to manage change, especially in disrupted times, like the current Covid-19 scenario, is essential to survive in this complex competitive environment. The role of information technologies for new business models and digital economy (Schallmo et al., 2017; Warner and Wäger, 2019; Zhang et al., 2016), the importance of investing in creating and nurturing human capital (Chung and Li, 2018; Lytras and Ordóñez de Pablos, 2008; Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004, 2005; Tang et al., 2020), the need to develop social networks with key stakeholders (Lytras et al., 2018), and the process of organisational learning and the mediator variables for value creation are topics that deserve full consideration (Kovačević et al., 2013; Pedler and Hsu, 2019; Srirama et al., 2020).

In this issue of *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*, the collection of five papers will explore and analyse organisational strategy, collaboration and cooperation and corporate culture and its implications for change.

2   Contents of the issue

This issue is formed by five papers that address different issues to understand organisational strategies and change in dynamic economic environments.

The first paper of this issue, titled 'Organisational strategy making and first-line manager challenges: a building and dwelling perspective' (by Gjøsæter and Kyvik), analyses:

> "Challenges confronted by first-line managers as strategy-makers within organisational frontline contexts, referred to as sites where customers and clients as end-users are served on a day-to-day basis. In the study, Heideggerian building and dwelling perspectives are used as conceptual foundations. A

building perspective implies deliberate strategy making based on goals usually determined by upper-level management. From a dwelling perspective on the other hand, strategy making is conducted non-deliberately by actors immersed in a relationally constituted nexus of social activity, as practical coping. Challenges confronted by first-line managers as strategy-makers within organisational frontline contexts as dwelling contexts are discussed, and implications for organisational strategy making as well as for the education of strategy-makers are elaborated."

The second paper, titled 'Is a cooperation of Latvian forest owners a viable strategic choice? Exploring a collaborative competitive advantage' (by Čirjevskis and Grasmane) states that:

"Latvia was one of the rare countries in Europe where forest owners cooperation was not developed. The empirical study aims to investigate internal and external settings (micro-foundations) that underpin the commercial viability of cooperative strategies of the Latvian forest owners. There have been three primary data collection methods in research: interviewing of experts of the Latvian forest industry, administering questionnaires among private forest experts, direct observation and archival research. Our research result illustrates that the most interested group of forest owners in cooperation is the one that owns 2,050 ha forest and constitutes 26% of the private forest area; thus, it provides a good potential for forest owners cooperative (FOC) development in Latvia. Research findings show that FOCs have opportunities to build their collaborative competitive advantage through better exploiting their resources and developing new capabilities to capture more economic rent."

The third paper, titled 'The impact of organic transformation: strategies and innovative ideas towards profitability – a case of Hathikuli Tea Estate' (by Paul and Mondal), reminds that:

"Tea has occupied an important place in India's economy for the last several decades. But in the recent time, India's contribution to global tea production and exports are trailing behind. The study examined how an ordinary tea estate becomes sustainable at the same time increase the production of high-quality tea and captures the global market as well. The purpose of this paper is to study the operational challenges that a tea garden faces during the organic transformation, and comprehend the benefit of the organic transformation of a tea estate with reference to the outstanding practices and innovative business ideas of Hathikuli Tea Estate. The paper reveals that, by bearing a huge loss, Hathikuli Tea Estate transformed into a sustainable organic tea garden, not only to capture the premium market of organic tea but also to dedicate efforts towards conservation of nature and provide the eco-friendly working environment. At the same time, the estate become profitable by introducing innovative ideas such as grow multiple products using the same resources, develop optimism tea supply chain to sell the organic tea by inventing tea boutique concept. The study includes a two-year detailed analysis of various tea estates in Assam including Hathikuli Tea Estate. Therefore, the study offers practitioners with a concise and pragmatic approach towards strategic decision making for organic transformation of a tea estate."

The fourth paper, titled 'Adopting a grounded theory approach for managing corporate culture change' (by Ebrahimi), proposes that:

"Since cultural change can be easily conceptualized as a social process, it is intuitively logical to use the grounded theory (GT) methodology to study organizational culture change. Providing a model of organizational culture change management in the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) was the

purpose of the present study. This company is a large corporation which was split into smaller separate corporations. It is managed under new vision, mission, and leadership. The concepts and categories, in open coding, were obtained by breaking up the data collected from five employees. Then, in axial coding, they shaped the paradigm model in which the phenomenon is managing corporate cultural change. The components of the desired culture as the result of the model were innovation, humanism, goal orientation, and social responsibility. Finally, five theories of the core category that aggregates all categories were presented in selective coding."

The last paper, titled 'Watch and progress strategy: a case study approach of India's Covid-19 pandemic situation' (by Anbarasan and Sushil) states that:

> "For over twelve months of experiencing the turbulent situation, i.e., from March 2020 to February 2021, India is the second-largest populated country and sixth-largest economy. The government is busy with many development projects, building infrastructures, introducing innovative technologies and expanding roadways that pave the way for future generations. Under these circumstances, the novel Covid-19 pandemic situation outbreak poses many challenges to the largest democratic country. This novel Covid-19 is new in human history, and hence the knowledge paradigm is exposed to many new twists and turns in the existing knowledge body. The knowledge obtained through holy scripts, wisdom is all in vain. It is the structured knowledge with concrete solutions that lend a helping hand. Thus, studying India's pandemic situation over twelve cycles of time series and analyzing the government effort to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic scenario seem to be scientific. Therefore, the study's rationale is to explore and analyze India's effort to attend to the pandemic situation and respond through containment strategy. Based on this case study, ten main factors identified, and TISM (total interpretive structural modelling) applied for model building."

References

Chung, D.S. and Li, J.M. (2018) 'Curvilinear effect of transformational leadership on innovative behavior among R&D teams in South Korea: moderating role of team learning', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp.252–270.

Kovačević, I., Minović, M., Milovanović, M., Ordóñez de Pablos, P. and Starcevic, D. (2013) 'Motivational aspects of different learning contexts: "My mom won't let me play this game…"', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, March, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp.354–363.

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.

Lytras, M.D., Visvizi, A., Daniela, L., Sarirete, A. and Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2018) 'Social networks research for sustainable smart education', *Sustainability*, Vol. 10, No. 9, p.2974.

Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2004) 'The nurture of knowledge-based resources through the design of an architecture of human resource management systems: implications for strategic management', *International Journal of Technology Management*, special issue, Vol. 27, Nos. 6/7, pp.533–543.

Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2005) 'Western and eastern views on social networks', *The Learning Organization – An International Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp.436–456.

Pedler, M. and Hsu, S-w. (2019) 'Regenerating the learning organisation: towards an alternative paradigm', *The Learning Organization*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp.97–112.

Schallmo, D., Williams, C.A. and Boardman, L. (2017) 'Digital transformation of business models – best practice, enablers, and roadmap', *International Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 21, No. 8, p.1740014.

Srirama, M.V., Iyer, P.P. and Reddy, H. (2020) 'Dimensions of social capital and learning culture: a case of an IT organization', *The Learning Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp.337–349.

Tang, J., Mo, L. and Liu, W-B. (2020) 'The attributes of organizational change: how person-organization value congruence influences employees' coping', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp.121–136.

Warner, K.S. and Wäger, M. (2019) 'Building dynamic capabilities for digital transformation: an ongoing process of strategic renewal', *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp.326–349.

Zhang, X., Chen, H., Wang, W and Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2016) 'What is the role of IT in innovation? A bibliometric analysis of research development in IT innovation', *Behaviour and Information Technology*, Vol. 35, No. 12, pp.1130–1143.