
Editorial: Knowledge management and intellectual capital in the digital economy

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1 Introduction

Covid-19 outbreak caused global unprecedented disruption with severe consequences in the domains of health, education and economy. Citizens, societies, and economies need to recover from this huge disruption in our lives and build more resilient societies and economies.

Governments need to monitor and analyse inequality across different regions of the world and compare the results. On June 1, 2021 the Joint Research Centre (JRC, the European Commission's science and knowledge service) launched an interactive tool called 'the EU multidimensional inequality monitoring framework', which will "monitor, map, track and compare inequalities across the EU" (European Commission, 2021a).

The development of strategic networks of collaboration in the fields of scientific research and ICTs as well as in education (Labra Gayo et al., 2010; Lytras et al., 2018; Ordóñez de Pablos, 2005; Ruangpermpool et al., 2020; Utami and Ekaputra, 2021) will be key to provide innovative solutions to current, new and emergent challenges and opportunities in the coming years and decrease inequality.

The transition towards green and low carbon economy will contribute to develop innovative products and services, boost jobs opportunities (green jobs) and competitiveness for countries and regions as well as sustainable growth (European Commission, 2021b, 2021c; Gao et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021).

The fields of knowledge management, organisational learning and intellectual capital (IC) can provide insights and tools for the fast recovery of societies and economies after the pandemic (Almunawar et al., 2021; Ordóñez de Pablos and Edvinsson, 2020). Creating and nurturing strategic human capital, relational capital and structural capital for companies and countries will play a key role in the development of eco-friendly, innovative businesses and sustainable growth (Anik and Sulisty, 2021; Lytras and Ordóñez de Pablos, 2008; Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004).

2 Contents of the issue

This first issue of 2022 presents a collection of five papers that contribute to a better understanding of several key issues for social and economic recovery in post-pandemic scenario: the role of IC in SMEs, the relation between IC efficiency and organisational performance, and the link between emotional and spiritual quotient and managerial efficiency of employees. Finally, the last paper of the issue reviews the evolution of the field IC after the publication of the pioneer paper by Professor Leif Edvinsson more than 20 years ago.

The first paper of the issue, titled ‘Intellectual capital in SMEs: a review and research agenda’ (by Demartini and Beretta), presents the results of a study. It 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 second paper of the issue, titled ‘Intellectual capital efficiency and firm performance: evidence from an emerging knowledge-economy’ (by Bhattacharjee and Akter) presents the empirical evidence of a study based on the listed companies of Bangladesh. It:

“Aims to frame the affinity between intellectual capital (IC) efficiency and different dimensions of business performance-financial, market, and economic. This study measured IC efficiency by adopting ‘value-added intellectual coefficient’ (VAIC) approach which estimates companies’ value addition capability considering physical capital, human capital, and structural capital. Using the lens of the resource-based view (RBV), the underlying study observes a positive connection of VAIC with companies’ financial and economic performance, whereas it is non-significant with market valuation. The study also reveals that among VAIC components, efficiency of physical capital is the most influential element for predicting business performance. Finally, the present research recommends that concentrating on intellectual resources as a substitute for tangible resources can uplift companies’ overall performance.”

The third paper, titled ‘Intellectual capital efficiency and financial performance in the hotel sector’ (by Vale, Teixeira Vale and Lopes) affirms that:

“In the current knowledge age, intellectual capital (IC) is crucial to create competitive advantages for organisations, something which has been leading to studies about its impact on the financial performance of organisations of different sectors of activity. However, when regarding the hotel sector, this topic is underexplored. This paper aims to understand the relationship between intellectual capital’s efficiency and the financial performance of micro, medium, and small-sized Portuguese companies pertaining to the hotel sector. The results suggest a positive and significant relationship between VAIC and hotels’ financial performance. More specifically, human capital efficiency and capital employed efficiency are the most important and statistically significant dimensions which impact such performance, regardless of the companies’ size.”

The fourth paper, titled ‘The relationship between emotional quotient, spiritual quotient affecting managerial efficiency of employees in organisations’ (by Singh, Upadhyay, Mishra and Grewal) analyses:

“The relation between emotional quotient and spiritual quotient. Also, the paper examines how emotional spiritual quotient together called as ESQ affects the working efficiency of professional. The sample used in the study comprised of 718 employees working in banking sector. Further exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was applied in studying the hypothesized conceptual model. The outcome of the study shows significant association between the study variables. EQ, SQ, together ESQ was closely studied and its impact on working efficiency of the service sector employees. Second, very rare studies have examined EQ and SQ together as ESQ which have mutual interdependence. The study examines the interrelation between emotional and spiritual quotient by studying them together, thereby making a mark on previous research and its relationship with managerial efficiency.”

The last paper of this issue is titled ‘From a value-based knowledge economy to a worth economy. New reflections and perspectives on intellectual capital research’ (by Edvinsson, Dal Mas, Ordóñez de Pablos, Massaro and Dumay). It analyses:

“The main evolution of intellectual capital (IC) research after 20 years from the first article published by Leif Edvinsson on the topic. In developing the paper, we highlight the main concerns that were stimulating the debate at the time. The paper employs a conceptual review starting from the questions raised in one of the first papers about IC. While 20 years ago, the debate was about the starting of the knowledge economy, the search for increasing economic value and IC research was at the beginning. Today we face a different situation. The knowledge economy represents a consolidated concept, and a new paradigm is emerging based on an economy in which sustainability and worth represent the core values. Organizations are employing new business models to create value that also embraces a sustainable perspective. New research streams on IC are emerging.”

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